

ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Referral-Consultation Process Between Primary and Secondary/Tertiary Care Physicians in Jamaica

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This study seeks to:

- (1) Describe qualitatively and quantitatively the problems found to exist with the referral-consultation process.
- (2) Highlight factors already in place which serve to promote an effective referral-consultation process.
- (3) Identify ~~areas seen as needing improvement in~~ order to promote an effective referral-consultation process.
- (4) Identify, based on conclusions drawn from the study, how problems may best be redressed and improvement made.

50 general practitioners volunteered to participate

in part one of the study.

These physicians recorded over a ten week period of time, relevant details of all referrals made.

In part two of the study a questionnaire was administered to 25 specialty consultants chosen by stratified random sampling techniques.

The results reveal that general practitioner referral patterns in Jamaica concur closely with general practitioner referral patterns in Britain and North America with about 45% of all referrals being made to the specialties of surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology and orthopaedics.

Findings in this study indicate that at the present time the referral-consultation process functions poorly.

There is a lack of awareness of the value of a functioning referral-consultation process among physicians and this situation is worsened by economic constraints and time limitations.

A need exists to establish a permanent forum for general practitioner-consultant interaction which would serve through discussion to remedy some of the

existing problems.

One important finding is that where levels of interaction are increased between referring physicians and consultants and a more personal relationship is forged the functioning of the referral process improves.

The author hopes that some of the findings and recommendations of this study will provide a basis for further discussions and investigations on this important topic.