

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Jamaican Women of Child-
bearing Age Regarding the Consequences of Environmental
Tobacco Smoke Exposure on Children's Health

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Abstract

Background: The author hypothesized that Jamaican women of child-bearing age are aware of some, but not all of the ill effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) on children's health, and have negative attitudes towards smoking and second hand smoking. Globally women have been targeted as potential users of tobacco products and the Global Youth Tobacco Survey in 2001 showed that 34.4% of Jamaican school girls initiated cigarette smoking before age 10.

Objective: To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of women within the child-bearing age-group regarding smoking and ETS exposure on children's health.

Design: A cross-sectional survey of women within the child-bearing age (15-45) was done using a pre-formulated interviewer-administered questionnaire and two focus groups were also conducted for qualitative analysis.

Subjects: Systematic sampling technique was utilized to select the 430 women (respondents) attending Antenatal and Family planning clinics in two major public hospitals in Kingston and St. Andrew, Jamaica, West Indies.

Results: Overall, the women had fair knowledge about ETS health risks, but some deficiencies existed. They had a negative attitude towards smoking in general and most supported a ban on smoking in school and other public places. The women knew least about how ETS affects otitis media (middle ear infection) in children and its association with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Significant knowledge differences existed between young and older women and between smokers and non-smokers.

The majority are desirous of having smoking cessation programmes in the clinics, community-based health promotion programmes, with more media and governmental input in combating ETS exposure of children.

Only a very small proportion (6.3%) of the women are smokers while nearly one-half of their spouses are, yet sixty (60%) percent did not allow smoking anywhere in their homes.

Conclusion: Even though it is clear that the women were somewhat knowledgeable about the effects of ETS exposure on children's health there is deficiencies in their knowledge of the government's position and steps been taken to counter this problem. In addition there is the need for all health professionals to reinforce knowledge of the possible problems of ETS exposure.