

ABSTRACT

A Preliminary Study of the Coping Skills and Attitudes of the Main Caregivers of the Elderly and Some Implications for Health Education

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Technological and medical advances together with improvements in public health measures have resulted in substantial gains in life expectancy for populations world wide. The challenges now are to improve the quality of life for individuals and to increase the period of independence for the growing numbers of elderly. The challenges are especially strong in the third world and Jamaica is no exception.

This preliminary study was undertaken to describe the elderly living in the August Town/Hermitage/Goldsmith Villas areas of East Rural St. Andrew, to describe and determine who their caregivers were, as well as to determine their coping skills and attitudes and to ascertain the implications for health education.

Findings indicated that the coping capacity of caregivers in the area was very good, their attitudes towards the elderly positive and that, far from having an adverse effect on their lives, caring may have filled a void. Findings also indicated that the main

caregivers of the elderly were female relatives, and that family support was strong.

Some implications for health education were that there was among caregivers and the church, untapped resources which may be usefully explored.

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