

ABSTRACT

The populations of the world are aging rapidly especially those of developing countries like the Caribbean and specifically, Jamaica where life expectancy at birth is 74 years. This study looked at retired public sector Registered Nurses and compared the findings with those of a similar study done concurrently on retired dock workers in Jamaica.

The studies examined the coping strategies and assessed the two groups paying special attention to their health and social status.

The data gleaned from the studies showed that the majority of retired nurses found were in the age group 60-64 years, only 5% of those over 75 years were found instead of the expected 39%. Sixty-three percent lived in rural areas and thirty-seven percent lived in Kingston and St. Andrew, while most of the dock workers lived in Kingston and St. Andrew. The majority owned a house.

The perceived health status of the groups was good and they are all mentally and physically self-supporting. The three main diseases affecting them, were hypertension, arthritis and diabetes. However, the incidence of these diseases among the groups was slightly lower than the national figures with the exception of arthritis which was more common among dock workers (30%) and was higher than in the nurses (25%) and the national population

of elderly (40%). The majority of them said they had no difficulty accessing health care and more than 50% got most of their health care from private practitioners, while an average of 20% said they were unable to finance their health care.

More than 70% of both groups said their pensions were inadequate to meet their financial needs. They therefore depend on other sources of income such as: present employment, investment and support from family. Hence, 70% of the nurses and 5% of the dock-workers were presently employed. The main coping strategies employed were close links with family and friends and active involvement in church and community groups. The nurses expressed a high level of satisfaction about themselves and life, more so than the dock workers.

These findings raise questions such as :” how will the retired nurses and dock-workers of the future cope with retirement?” It is therefore necessary for their employers and professional associations to develop and implement retirement plans for them with urgency.