

ABSTRACT

Adolescent pregnancy has been recognized as an international phenomenon. A significant negative aspect of adolescent pregnancy is the risk of adverse health consequences for both mother and baby if left untreated. Health of mothers and children has been a priority for Caribbean health services for over fifty years and is included in the goals and targets for the Caribbean Corporation of Health. The antenatal coverage is more than 95% in Jamaica. In spite of high overall attendance in the Caribbean, however late booking to antenatal clinic is a common phenomenon especially amongst adolescents. This study aims to find out some of the factors associated with this phenomenon. The investigation sought to identify the knowledge, attitudes, practices and beliefs of pregnant teenagers towards booking at the antenatal clinic. The sample comprised 100 pregnant teenagers between 11-19 years, attending the antenatal clinic at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital. Fifty were late attenders and fifty early attenders. A case study method was employed to collect data. These were coded and analysed using the SPSS Statistical Package.

The research findings revealed that both early and late attenders shared common characteristics. They were mainly single, in unstable relationships and for the most part unemployed, were not

educated beyond secondary school, had unplanned pregnancies but had reasonable knowledge of contraceptive methods. The findings also suggested that educational and employment opportunities might alleviate some of the problems attenders experienced. Despite early diagnosis of pregnancy, the respondents were not motivated to register early in health facilities. Failure to register early was attributed to reluctance to disclose pregnancy.

Implementation of the following were recommended:

1. Programmes aimed at motivating teenagers to access health facilities early in their pregnancy
2. Provision for high employability for those unable to return to school
3. Expansion of the services presently provided by the Women's Center to serve a larger percentage of the pregnant teenage population

These programmes should provide valuable insight into the health seeking behaviours of teenage pregnant women and thereby result in effective interventions that address their needs.