

Abstract

An Epidemiological Survey of the Elderly in Jamaica.

A. M. Denise Eldemire

Populations across the world are ageing in terms of years of life after 60 and the section of the population referred to as the elderly is growing at a rapid rate. Among the countries of the developing world, the Caribbean including Jamaica has the oldest elderly population. The experience of the developed world is that elderly related issues are many and diverse.

This study examines the history of public health contributions to the successful ageing of the Jamaican population.

The study also examines the demographic, health and nutritional features of the elderly population. Social, economic and health related issues are defined and used to make recommendations for future policy and programmes.

The Jamaican elderly population now comprises over ten percent of the total population. The elderly however are for the most part both mentally competent and physically independent. The elderly continue to live in family units and the family is the main source of support both emotional and financial.

The study identified the older female especially those over 80 as being more likely to be alone and "at risk".

Overall the elderly were healthy and the major chronic diseases identified were hypertension and diabetes and women were affected more than men. In addition obesity was identified as the main nutritional problem.