

## ABSTRACT

### **A study of cardiovascular disease risk factors among attendees of an urban Jamaican Community Health Centre**

#### **Background**

The two most significant cardiovascular diseases are ischemic heart disease and cerebrovascular disease. By controlling risk factors, including smoking, lack of physical activity, obesity, hypertension, diabetes and high blood cholesterol, much burden of the disease can be prevented.

#### **Methods**

The study employed both quantitative (case control) and qualitative (focus group) approaches.

This study (cases = 100, controls = 100) was conducted at the Department of Community Health and Psychiatry Health Centre during the month of March 2005. Cases were defined as previously diagnosed with diabetes and/or hypertension, attending outpatient clinic at the Health Centre. Controls were clients 20 years and over attending the general outpatient clinic at the same time as cases.

## Results

Participants under 40 years of age were significantly less likely to be hypertensive (OR = 0.092). These findings are consistent with the fact that age is the major independent risk factor for this disease. Obesity and smoking were prevalent among cases and controls, this is a cause for concern. Forty one percent of the cases had a family history of hypertension, 20% of diabetes and 39% both diabetes and hypertension. This supports the fact that genetic predisposition plays an important role in the development of diseases. The regular use of fried foods was common among cases and controls (18% and 22% respectively). Alcohol use was also prevalent among cases (20%) and controls (21%). This brings out the need for lifestyle changes among the study population. Fifty six percent of the cases disagreed that it was easy for them to make changes in order to control their illness, while the focus group discussions revealed clients inability to purchase medication and the 'right kinds' of food. There is therefore the need for social intervention in this study population.

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