

**ASSESSMENT OF THE NUTRITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND
PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS IN RELATION TO THEIR DIETARY
PRACTICES.**

Rhonda Arthur

Project Supervisor: Dr. Selby Nichols

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Background: Throughout the world, obesity is progressively becoming an endemic dilemma. Reports have indicated that in 2005, over 1 billion people were regarded as overweight and over 300 million obese. The World Health Organisation has projected that this figure will increase significantly to 1.5 billion by the year 2015. Within the Caribbean, it has also been estimated that 10% men and 25% women are obese. (Fitzroy Henry 2006).

Objective: The main objective of this study was to assess their nutritional knowledge, attitudes and practices of public sector workers in relation to their dietary behaviour.

Design: The study was a cross sectional survey which was conducted among 102 persons between the ages of 18 -65. Participants were conveniently chosen, from five different government institutions, to respond self administered questionnaires which gathered information on their nutritional knowledge, attitudes, practices and their dietary changes.

Results: The findings revealed that a positive attitude towards obtaining nutrition information was significantly correlated with consideration of sodium ($p=.01$) and fibre ($p=.006$) and was significantly associated with decrease intake of dairy products/eggs ($p=.030$), fats and oils ($p=.026$) and an increased their intake of vegetables ($p=.044$). Nutritional knowledge/awareness was significantly correlated with consideration of most nutrients on labels except calories. High nutritional knowledge was also significantly associated with a changes in fats and oils ($p=.017$), dairy products/eggs ($p=.05$), fruits ($p=.05$) and fish ($p=.039$). Self-reported eating habits rating was also significantly associated with a decrease in dairy products/eggs ($p=.013$) and sugar/jam ($p=.010$).

Conclusion: Consideration of nutrition information and viewing of labels were significantly associated with consideration of total fats, sodium, sugar and fibre. These findings indicate that both nutritional knowledge and attitudes plays a key role in influencing dietary practices. These

results suggest that both variables must be taken into consideration when developing nutrition intervention programs which is required to cause behavioural modifications.