

ABSTRACT

Adolescent Depression in Wards of The State in Kingston and St. Andrew (Ages 10-18 Years)

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In Jamaica, wards of the state are persons who fall under the care and jurisdiction of the government. The 1948 Juvenile Act for wards of the state and the regulation of 1951 governs homes /places of safety. (MOH Children's Services Division)

The prevalence of depression in adolescents in Jamaica is not known, as no study has been done in that area. The aim of this study is to establish the prevalence of depression in places of safety and children's homes and the factors associated with it.

A cross sectional survey was conducted in four places of safety and four children's home. Three hundred and nine subjects between the ages of 10-18 years were interviewed; ten subjects refused to be interviewed.

A questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the Beck Depression Inventory, and administered with the assistance of four research assistants.

The study showed that the two primary reasons for the institutionalisation of these subjects were behavioural problems and for care & protection. A majority 51.78% of the sample was from single parent homes in which the resident parent is likely to be the mother. Only 15.53% of the sample lived with both parents. Approximately 20.1% of the sample had suicidal thoughts or had attempted suicide. The over all prevalence of depression was over 38%, with a mean

depression score of 10.745 ± 10.611 . Depression in girls was significantly higher than that in boys and was greatest among the (13-15 yr.) age group. Glenhope Place of Safety had the highest rate of depression with a mean depression score of 22.97 ± 10.15 , a prevalence of over 90%.

In order to reduce the prevalence in this population, risk factors will have to be addressed. A multifaceted intervention strategy is needed to deal with family life and parenting.

Interventions necessary in these institutions such as mentoring and other strategies are discussed.