

ABSTRACT

Dietary Practices and Attitudes of People Living with HIV/AIDS Attending Center of HIV/AIDS Research and Education Services aged 20-55 Years.

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HIV/AIDS is now one of the many emerging health problem, which has become a serious developmental issue in the Caribbean region. It is a critical problem for Jamaican adults and children as their overall health status can be affected as well as the socio-economical and psychological aspect of their lives. The number of HIV cases continues to rise on a daily basis, which places a priority and a burden on the health system. There is no drug on the horizon to eliminate this disease but prevention and proper treatment can decrease the prevalence of the disease. Nutritional intervention can be beneficiary to PLWHA but in the Caribbean this aspect of care is often neglected.

Research Methods

Subjects were recruited conveniently during the period of February to March 2004. It consisted of 100 PLWHA aged 20-55 years: 62 females and 38 males. A cross-sectional study design was used and interviewed questionnaires were administered to collect data. The participation rate was 71.4%.

Results

The majority of respondents were females younger than forty years. This finding applied to the population that is most affected by HIV. The study showed that

more males (68.4%) than females (54.8%) consumed the same type of food week to week. There was a fair distribution between the area of residence and employment status. Examination of meal patterns revealed that more males than females tended to consume three meals and snacks. A large majority of participant had concerns about diet consumption of which financial constraints, too sick to eat and no appetite was among the highest. Fifty-two percent of males and 58% females included different food type to make their diet healthier. Fruits and vegetables were amongst the highest food type included in their diet followed by meat and fish; cereals and peas were used lesser. This finding can be related to the study performed by Bodgen, JD who found out that inadequate protein intake was common in these individuals. Overall, perceptions of the contributions of healthy eating were excellent in both male and female. More males than females were underweight as compared to more females than males tended to be obese.

Dietary attitudes and practices of PLWHA were good but study revealed that socio-economic factor was a major deterrent for proper diet consumption. Based on these finding some recommendations were made so as to improve the existent nutritional programmes for these individuals. Nutrition plays a vital role to delay disease progression and decrease risk of opportunistic infections.

Key words: Dietary, Attitudes, Practices, PLWHA, HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, Delay, Progression, Opportunistic Infections.