

## ABSTRACT

### KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF WOMEN AGES 18-44 YEARS REGARDING OBESITY IN SURBURBAN JAMAICA

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Obesity has become a major public health problem in the Caribbean. This study described the knowledge, attitudes and practices of reproductive aged women regarding obesity. It provided data on reproductive aged female clinic attenders.

A sample of 44 clients were selected from the clinic population of persons attending the general clinic sessions with no present history of pregnancy, diabetes or hypertension. Persons less than three months post-partum were excluded from the sample. The group was further divided in two with 20 obese persons (Body Mass Index (BMI)  $>25$ ) and 24 non-obese persons (Body Mass Index  $<25$ ).

There was no significant difference between the obese and non-obese groups in the knowledge scores. However there was a significant difference in the attitude scores between the obese and non-obese.

No significant statistical difference was found between the mean daily calorie intake of the two groups. In addition no significant statistical difference was found between the obese and non-obese groups in the contribution of calories from complex carbohydrates. An interesting finding

was that there was a higher proportion of calories from complex carbohydrates in the non-obese group compared to the obese group which suggested that the non-obese group may be eating more food from complex carbohydrate sources than the obese group were.

The causes of obesity are multifactorial. It is a disease that can be prevented. Dietary modifications and behavioural changes through the promotion of a healthy lifestyle can be seen as an effective means in the prevention and control of obesity. These methods could be promoted through an effective health education programme with the aid of the health belief model.