

ABSTRACT

All over the world, the use of seatbelts is becoming the norm. (Petrucci. 1987). Countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Australia and the United States have all had successful rewards through the enforcement of legislation requiring drivers and passengers to wear seatbelt.

In the Caribbean region, The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago introduced its seatbelt legislation a little over two years ago. In 1999, Jamaica enacted its own Protective Safety devices legislation. This is quite timely, as 3423 persons have been killed on the roads between 1991-1999.

The high cost of treating persons involved in motor vehicle crashes and the large number of fatalities that occur as a result of these crashes, pose great public health concern for the country. Persons 50 years and over are at even greater risk if involved in motor vehicle crashes.

A cross sectional study was conducted in Kingston and St. Andrew among eighty-eight persons 50 years and over and the prevalence of seatbelt use among this population was examined.

The study found that among drivers 81% were observed wearing seatbelts. There were more male, than female respondents (64.8% versus 35.2%). 35.2% of respondents had completed college/university and 98.9% of respondents had front seatbelts installed in

their vehicles, while 90% had back seatbelts installed. There were no significant relationships between gender, age, and type of driver with respect to frequency of reported seatbelt use. (p -values >0.05). There was perfect agreement between respondents who reported that they wore seatbelts while driving and those reported that their vehicles were equipped with front seatbelts.