

ABSTRACT
KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS
OF FOOD HANDLERS
WITH RESPECT TO THE FOOD HANDLERS' CERTIFICATION
PROGRAMME
IN ST CATHERINE, JAMAICA

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A cross sectional study among food handlers who attended food handlers clinic was conducted in St. Catherine during the period March-April 2003 at zone 1 and 2 Health Centres. A total of one hundred and ninety food handlers were interviewed with the aim of assessing their knowledge, attitudes and perceptions with regards to the Food Handlers Certification Programme.

The mean age was 31.9 ± 12.5 . Most food handlers attended secondary school up to grade 10-11. Those employed constituted 65% of the study population. Results have shown a high level of knowledge being demonstrated by the respondents with regards to the requirements for the certification programme of the overall sample.

For the qualitative data it was found out that most respondents had positive attitudes toward the operation of the clinic but negative attitudes toward other areas and these varied.

Respondents knowledge of the penalties for working without a permit was significantly associated with them always having their food handlers permit ($\chi^2=5.654$; $p<0.05$). Also their reply to educational material given to take home was significant among the zones ($\chi^2=26.620$; $p<0.05$).

It was found out that most food handlers were knowledgeable about the certification programme of the clinic. Both positive and negative responses were given with regards to the level of satisfaction with the operation of the food handlers clinic. Majority of the food handlers were functionally literate and were aware of the penalty for working in a food related area without a permit in their possession.

The study revealed that food handlers were not reluctant in following through with the Food Certification Programme. Recommendations were made accordingly such as; reducing the time taken to acquire the permit and for exam results to be given prior to acquiring the permit, so that early appointment could be made for re-training and re-sitting of the exam.