

## ABSTRACT

### Health Care Delivery in Barbados: Utilization of the Drug Service by the Elderly

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This thesis on the health care delivery system of Barbados, places special emphasis on the Barbados Drug Service utilization by the elderly. Increased human longevity and changing disease patterns have created the need for community-oriented programmes and community support systems for the elderly in Barbados. The Barbados Drug Service is analysed in the context of the broader national health care system.

Historically, the system of health care in Barbados was characterized by institutional care provided at the one Government-owned General Hospital, one Psychiatric Hospital and five District Hospitals which provided long-term care for the aged and indigent. Over the years, Barbados has advanced the kind of health care system reflective of primary health care but with some deficiencies.

The current thrust is decentralization of health services to make the rich and poor alike have equal access to good quality health services. A network of eight polyclinics has been strategically located at various points in the island to provide comprehensive care. One of the services provided at the polyclinics is the drug service with special benefits for the elderly.

The empirical aspect of this thesis provides a survey on the awareness, perception, knowledge and pattern of utilization of the Barbados Drug Service by the elderly.

The study findings reveal a high-level of awareness of the existence of the Barbados Drug Service, limited knowledge of the benefits and the failure of the elderly to make maximum use of the service due to their perception and lack of knowledge of the service. Another finding is that many elderly people view the Barbados Drug Service as dealing with illegal drugs and drug abuse. The study identifies problems encountered by the users of the service and includes some of their suggestions for improvement. Recommendations are made based on the study findings.