

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Health Workers (Nursing Cadre) Toward the Elderly Population Age 60 Years and Over: a Hospital Based Survey.

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A cross- sectional study was conducted among nurses in the parishes of Kingston and Saint Andrew, Jamaica. It was carried out at one public and one private hospital. A total of 107 nurses were targeted with the aim to assess their knowledge, attitude, and perception towards the elderly population.

Most of the participants were females (98.6 %) in comparison to males.

The mean age was 35.7 ± 11.5 . The results showed that the elderly are perceived as resourceful persons (56.9 %). It has also shown that the participants had a good knowledge (60 %) of these individuals, in terms of the physiological changes they undergo as they aged. The majority of them (90.3%) believed that behaviour and attitude can influence one's perception of them.

With regard to attitude, 70% of the participants were found to have a positive attitude towards the elderly. The majority (87.5 %) were able to cope very well when administering care to these individual. However, only 4.2 % were able to cope excellently. A minority (7%) did not cope very well.

While the majority of the participants had a positive perception of the elderly, there were some negative perceptions expressed. These include perceptions of the elderly as burdensome and miserable. Poor tolerance and coping abilities were also found among different individuals, who render care and assistance to these group of persons. Regardless of one's perception however, optimum health care should be given to the elderly to improve their quality of life.

Key words: perception, health workers, elderly, health care facility, quality of health care.