

ABSTRACT

A REVIEW OF AEROMEDICAL TRANSPORT IN JAMAICA JANUARY 1, 1989 - DECEMBER 31, 1990

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The use of aircraft in the transport of critically ill patients has become an invaluable adjunct to ground transport worldwide. In Jamaica, the military airwing has been employed for this purpose since its inception in 1963. This study reviews all requests made to the airwing for aeromedical evacuation of patients over a two-year period. For each case transferred, detailed analysis of the flight data was carried out and a determination made of the patient outcome. Hospital medical records were reviewed as far as possible. The results obtained were discussed and compared to other studies.

Of the 294 flight requests made, 89% were carried out transporting a total of 271 patients. Eighty-seven percent of these patients were transferred to 3 major urban hospital centres. Approximately two-thirds of these patients were males with a mean age of 35 years. Trauma accounted for over two-thirds of the cases, with motor vehicle accidents as the cause in over a half. The mortality rate was 33% with almost two-thirds of the patients dying before or within 24 hours of admission.

The aircraft most commonly employed was the 206b Bell Jet Ranger but there was a high usage of the fixed wing BN2A Islander for this purpose also. The distances flown ranged from 18 - 96 nautical miles and the longest flying time was 57 minutes.

An aeromedical evacuation service is an expensive resource. Jamaica, a third world country with a limited budget, has to be very cautious with its usage. This study has provided useful information regarding the current state of the service in the island. Recommendations, based on these findings, have been made towards improving the system.