

ABSTRACT

Both the Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Health, and international agencies have been involved in the design, support, implementation and evaluation of the primary health care programme in the County of Cornwall. The programme involves several approaches to the provision of simple health services through the training of community health aides (CHAs), and the changing of the roles of midwives and other health staff who are involved in bringing primary health care to the neighbourhood level through Type I health centres with maternal services, and home-visiting. The programme has as one of its major aims the improvement of formal training of health staff involved in primary health care, and on-going in-service training forms an integral part of this programme.

Evaluation of this in-service training programme in relation to nutrition knowledge and its practical application is the purpose of this study.

Sixty-four nutrition knowledge questionnaires based on topics covered in the in-service training over a specific period were administered to health staff of Type I health centres (CHAs and DMs) throughout the 14 parishes in the County of Cornwall. Interviews with the mothers of children 0-24 months of age who attended child welfare clinics were conducted immediately after consultation with the midwives. Their recollection of nutrition advice received was compared with those recorded on child health cards to determine the appropriateness of advice given as they related to

the age, present feeding regime and nutritional status of the children. Changes in the nutritional status between visits to clinic were also examined as an indicator of nutrition knowledge imparted on community nutrition.

While nutrition knowledge of both categories of health staff was found to be generally adequate, the results indicated that there were specific areas in which greater emphasis is necessary. A wide gap between nutrition knowledge and its application by the health workers in terms of giving sound advice to clinic attenders is indicated. Enough importance is not attached to record-keeping by health workers.