

**Knowledge, Attitudes, Perceptions and Practices of
Residents of Port Maria, St. Mary, With Respect to
Leptospirosis and Rodent Control**

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By

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Abstract

Rats and mice continue to be a menace to human populations since ancient times. In Jamaica they are the most important reservoir for Leptospirosis which is the number one zoonotic disease on the island. The most recent outbreak of Leptospirosis occurred in Jamaica in November 2005 and St Mary was one of the parishes affected.

A cross sectional study was conducted to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practice of residents of Port Maria, St. Mary with respect to rodents and Leptospirosis. The study was conducted in a randomly selected zone of the Port Maria Health District. The sample was selected using a systematic method where one in every five premises was selected to be involved in the interviews and inspection exercise. Key informants at the St. Mary Health Department were interviewed to include a qualitative aspect to the study.

Nine localities were involved and 201 premises were inspected and a respondent interviewed in each. Reports from residents indicated the presence of a heavy infestation of rodents in the area. Residents had limited knowledge of rodents and Leptospirosis.

There was a significant association between respondents who had secondary or higher education and knowledge of Leptospirosis (Pearson $X^2 = 10.621$; $df=4$; $p=0.031$). It was also revealed that there was significant association between the majority of people with low knowledge scores and low practice scores, (Pearson $X^2 = 11.85$; $df=2$; $p=0.003$). It was found that people who perceived that good sanitation was the best method of rodent control had higher practice scores than those who perceived differently. (Pearson $X^2 = 18.17$; $df=2$; $p=0.0001$).

The residents of the study area were found to have an average knowledge about rodents and their behavior in the environment but very limited knowledge of Leptospirosis.

It is recommended that the St, Mary Health Department, in their effort to sensitize the parish about the rodent and Leptospirosis problems, needs to enhance their health education/promotion package to impact a higher proportion of the population.