

# **AN ANALYSIS OF THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PERSONS LIVING WITH HUMAN IMMUNO-DEFICIENCY VIRUS IN ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

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**Background:** The Caribbean region ranks second to sub-Saharan region in the number of new HIV cases. In fact HIV/AIDS ranks as one of the top five causes of mortality in the region. Mortality and morbidity from HIV/AIDS is known to increase with a reduction in lean body mass.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to assess body composition and dietary practices among persons living with HIV/AIDS

**Design:** A case-control design was used. Case consisted of 36 HIV positive persons while the control group comprised of 37 persons with the same age band who were not tested and are presumed HIV negative (control). Participants filled out a questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic and dietary items. In addition, participants had weight, height, upper mid arm circumference and triceps skinfold measured using standard procedure.

**Results:** Persons living with HIV/AIDS had significantly lower mean weight, BMI, upper mid arm circumferences, and upper mid-arm muscle area than their HIV/AIDS negative counterparts. They were also less likely to consume minimum recommended intakes of fruit and vegetables. Additionally they were significantly less likely to use multivitamins and other dietary supplements than their HIV/AIDS negative counterparts.

**Conclusion:** The findings suggest that this group of persons living with HIV/AIDS is at increased risk for poor intakes of fruits and vegetables. In addition they have lower levels of lean body mass and might be at increased risk for morbidity and mortality compared to their HIV negative counterparts.

