

ABSTRACT

Nutritional Status of Preschool Children in a Rural Coastal Community in Jamaica.

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A study of the nutritional status, socio-economic and social backgrounds of children between 6 and 48 months was carried out in eight districts in Eastern Portland. All households in the area were visited and a total of 261 children identified. Anthropometric measurements of children were taken and a questionnaire administered to the mother or guardian.

Weight for age ($p < 0.05$) and weight for height ($p < 0.01$) declined significantly as the children became older but there was no difference in height for age among the age groups.

Six percent of the children were moderately and less than one percent severely malnourished, using the Gomez classification. Five percent were moderately and four percent severely stunted. One percent was moderately wasted and a further one percent severely wasted. The highest prevalence of malnutrition was in the 13-24 month age group.

Using bivariate analyses, several factors were

found to be associated with poor nutritional status. These included the child's age, low birthweight, duration of breast feeding, mother's age, father's presence in the home, occupation and financial support of the child and frequency of cornmeal consumption.

Seventy two percent of households were engaged in farming activities. The farming variables which were examined were not associated with nutritional status. There was a high level of unemployment among the mothers. Twenty five percent of fathers were unemployed. There was a great need for improved water supply as the majority of households obtained water from the river.