

ABSTRACT

An Epidemiological Study of the Health Concerns of Imprisoned Women in Jamaica.

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Holistic health care does not stop when someone is incarcerated. It may well be that, at such a crucial time in their lives, Inmates may be more receptive to anyone who displays a genuine concern for them.

This cross-sectional study addressed the health concerns of imprisoned women in Jamaica. The eighty-six inmates studied represented 91.5% of the total population; 7.4% declined to participate and one person had to be excluded because of mental illness.

The inmates were mostly Jamaicans, incarcerated for a variety of crimes including murder. The Non-Jamaicans were imprisoned exclusively for drug related crimes. The mean age was 32.6 years with a range of 17 - 62 years. Eighty-eight percent of these women were in the child bearing age group and three of them were pregnant

Biomedical indicators revealed that 16% of the inmates had positive VDRL tests and 32% were anaemic. Obesity was observed in 52% of the inmates. Elevated diastolic blood pressure was noted in 22% and elevated random blood glucose detected in 7%.

It is being recommended that all female inmates have routine physical assessments including HIV testing and Pap Smears on admission to prison. In addition to the existing rehabilitative efforts, physical education and peer counselling are among the recommendations being made. For the control of sexually transmitted diseases, contact tracing is also being recommended.