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Psychiatric workers' perception of deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill in government hospitals in Jamaica

The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions that psychiatric workers in Government Hospitals in Jamaica have concerning deinstitutionalized patient care for the mentally ill. A qualitative descriptive design was used. Participants were selected through convenience sampling and comprised twenty-two psychiatric workers who at the time were working with psychiatric patients in two public hospitals. Ethical approval was obtained. Data were collected through three focus group discussions guided by five broad questions. The results revealed that the psychiatric workers had a good knowledge of deinstitutionalization. Secondly, participant narratives showed that stigma, as well as abuse of the mentally ill in their communities was of grave concern. Thirdly, they highlighted issues of cost, accessibility and availability of medications as being problematic. Fourthly, in some cases they received little or no assistance from family members, communities and the police. It is imperative that an aggressive campaign be mounted to sensitize

communities about the benefits of deinstitutionalization and highlight the associated stigma of the mentally ill patients. Simultaneously the support services must be improved and deinstitutionalized mental health care must be rigorously pursued.

Speaker Biography

Andrea Pusey Murray is a Senior Lecturer and Program Director for Undergraduate Nursing Program at the Caribbean School of Nursing, University of Technology, Jamaica (Papine Campus). She has published peer reviewed articles in journals such as International Journal of Nursing Science, Journal of Biomedical Science and Engineering and Mental Health in Family Medicine. She has authored a book chapter entitled, "Attendance and performance of undergraduate students in two nursing courses in a University in Jamaica", in Advancing Education in the Caribbean and Africa and co-authored "Cultural Voices and Human Rights: Case Exemplars" in the Routledge Handbook of Global Mental Health Nursing. Currently, she serves on the Curriculum and Development Committee - Nursing Council of Jamaica. She holds membership with the Nurses Association of Jamaica and Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing - Theta theta Chapter. Her research interests' focus on mental health, public health sexually transmitted infections and education.

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