

Supaporn Upalabat. 2000. *Developing Personnel 's Empathy towards Patients in Psychiatric Wards*. Master of Nursing Thesis in Mental Health and Psychiatric Nursing, Graduate School, Khon Kaen University. [ISBN 974-678-016-6]

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Abstract

The objectives of this action research were to study problems related to empathy in patients care, and to improve empathic understanding towards patients among health personnel of psychiatric wards in Prasimahabodi Psychiatric Hospital, Ubonrajchatanee Province. A sample consisted of 38 personnels from Male Psychiatric Ward 1 and Female Psychiatric Ward 3, and 34 patients in both wards. A needs assessment was conducted using Nominal Group technique and a focus group discussion. The instruments used in this research were observation check list, an interview guide, a questionnaire, a tape recorder, and two set of evaluation forms developed by using Guttman scales. The coefficients of both scales were 0.93. Data were analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentage, Mean and the Wilcoxon test. Data collected from observations, interviews, focus group discussions and Nominal Group process were content analyzed.

The results of this study indicated that the health personnels were not initially aware of the significance of empathic understanding, therefore, they were not capable to apply it with their patients.

After participating in the needs assessment and an empathic understanding promoting program, the health personnels significantly demonstrated their behaviour change. The patients were able to observe the more attention and the better care provided for them. It is important to note that the personnel's empathic understanding remained even in the one month follow up study.