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ARIYA DEEPRASERT : MENTAL HEALTH AND CARING BEHAVIORS OF CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL RETARDATION. THESIS ADVISORS : WANNA KONGSURIYANAVIN, Ed.D., JARUWAN T. SKUL, M.S.W., YAJAI SITTHIMONGKOL, Ph.D. 85 PAGE. ISBN 974-664-440-8.

Primary caregivers of mentally retarded children need especially good mental health to cope with the high levels of stress and change. Their behaviors are crucial to the development of the children. This study was to examine the mental health status, caring behaviors and the relationship between mental health and caring behaviors of the primary caregivers of children with mental retardation. The subjects consisted of 110 primary caregivers of children with mental retardation aged between 1 month -6 years who had been brought to the outpatient department at Rachanugoon hospital. Data were collected by 3 separate questionnaires demographic details, general health and caring behaviors. The data was analyzed by frequency and percentage, mean and Chi-square test.

The results showed that 80.9 percent of the subjects had a normal healthy function. Whereas 19.1 percent had potential psychiatric disorders. Their scores showed extremely high levels of anxiety and insomnia ($\bar{X}=1.14$). The subjects had caring behaviors at a high level with a percentage of mean scores of 82.67. The result also showed that mental health was related to caring behaviors of caregivers of children with mental retardation at a nonsignificant level ($p>.05$).

These findings suggested that nurses should provide continue counselling for all primary caregivers particularly those who have potential psychiatric problems. A similar follow up study of the same group should be made.