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M.N.S. (PSYCHIATRIC - MENTAL HEALTH NURSING)**

**KEY WORDS : KNOWLEDGE/ ATTITUDE/ RELATIONSHIP/ CAREGIVER/
PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT**

**CHONLAPORN KONGKUM: KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD
MENTAL ILLNESS AND CAREGIVER-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS: A STUDY
OF CAREGIVERS OF PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS IN CENTRAL REGION
PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL. THESIS ADVISORS: TASSANA BOONTONG
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Psychiatric patients suffers disorders of thought, decision, emotion, behavior, and self-care, all of which are chronic, so caregivers have an important role in helping the patient recuperate physically, emotionally, and socially. They can make sure that the patients receive proper medication and checkups consistently. In order to give effective care, the caregiver must have the right knowledge and attitudes toward mental illness and a good relationship with psychiatric patient.

This study is a descriptive study. Its purpose was to study the knowledge and attitudes toward mental illness, and the relationship between the caregiver and the psychiatric patient. The sample group is the caregivers of psychiatric patients who were admitted into the psychiatric hospitals in the central region of the country and were diagnosed having Schizophrenia, Mood disorder, Mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use, and Psychosis, who numbered 390 patients. The questionnaires were developed by the researcher which consisted of demographic data about caregivers, demographic data about psychiatric patients, knowledge of caregivers about mental illness, attitudes of caregivers toward mental illness, and caregiver-patient relationships. It was tested for validity by experts and reliability limits of 0.77,0.86, and 0.82, respectively. The data were analyzed by frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

It was found from the study that most caregivers of psychiatric patients have good knowledge of mental illness, about 72.3%. The caregivers have moderate attitudes toward mental illness ($\bar{X}=2.80,SD=0.34$), and have good relationships with psychiatric patients ($\bar{X}=3.21,SD=0.35$). It was found, in detail, that few caregivers know that genetics and neurotransmitters are causes of mental illness, or knew the side effects of electrical therapy. The caregivers felt that psychiatric patients have less tolerance than normal people, create problems and area burden to the families. Psychiatric nurse should play a role in giving knowledge to caregivers and the general public about mental illness, to develop good attitudes about mental illness, and to promote good relationships between the caregivers and the psychiatric patients continuously.