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RATTIKORN MUANGNANG : KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES
TOWARD MENTAL ILLNESS AND CAREGIVER-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS:
A STUDY OF CAREGIVERS OF PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS IN
NORTHEASTERN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL. THESIS ADVISORS :
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Mental illness is chronic disease which is characterized by cognitive, emotional and behavior abnormalities. The psychiatric patients may not be able to look after themselves in performing every day functions, so they must receive help from caregivers.

The purposes of this descriptive study were to examine knowledge of caregivers about mental illness, attitudes of caregivers toward mental illness and caregiver – patient relationships. The samples were caregivers who brought psychiatric patients to Prasrimahabhodi psychiatric hospital. Accidental sampling method used to collect 350 caregivers closely related to the patients. The data were collected from 15 February 1999 to 30 March 1999. The questionnaires used in this study consisted of questions about demographic data about caregivers and demographic data about psychiatric patients. The reliability of the questionnaire data concerning knowledge of caregivers about mental illness, attitudes of caregivers toward mental illness, and caregiver – patient relationships were 0.77, 0.77 and 0.86 respectively. The data were analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

The results of this study revealed that most caregivers (62 %) possessed good knowledge about mental illness. The caregivers had moderate attitudes toward mental illness ($\bar{X}=2.88$, S.D.=0.46). Caregiver- patient relationships were good ($\bar{X}=3.03$, S.D.=0.37). When considering the knowledge in detail, it was found that the caregivers had a lack of knowledge about side effects from psychotropic drugs and treatment by electroconvulsive therapy. Implications for nursing practice are that psychiatric nurses should give knowledge about mental illness and encouragement to create a positive attitude of caregivers toward mental illness.