NURSES KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTALLY ILL PATIENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this quantitative descriptive research study was to identify the attitudes of nurses towards mentally ill patients. The objectives of this study included the investigation of nurses' views and attitudes towards mentally ill patients, and whether variables such as gender, working experience, grade and age have an influence on these attitudes. Data was collected using The Attitudes Towards Acute Mental Health (33), ATAMH(33), (Baker, 2006), administered to a convenience sample of 150 subjects recruited from a state owned psychiatric hospital. All nursing grades were represented in this study. In a broad manner the findings in this study largely agreed with similar studies carried out elsewhere. In fact the large majority of the partecipants showed a level of positive regard towards mentally ill patients. As stated in most litterature and also evident in the partecipant's replies, stigma and negative attitudes should be reduced as much as possible for acceptance to occur. Results do show a slightly higher postive attitudinal difference between Registered Mental Health Nurses than other nurses. This may be attributed to the more in depth education of Registered Mental Health Nurses. This needs to be investigated further in order to be able to confirm if this is the case. Results analysed by gender, age and years of experience in the mental health field followed the same pattern of the main results. Education and knowledge play a key role in the formation of attitudes, so education and knowledge about mental health and mental illness is of the essence in order to overcome stigma, prejudice and discrimination and provide the highest level of care possible.