

## Caregivers' knowledge attitude and perceptions towards Occupational Therapy in mental health Zimbabwe

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**Introduction:** There has been a wide recognition of the importance of involving caregivers to strengthen mental health services including occupational therapy. However, the tremendous potential of caregivers to facilitate recovery in patients with mental illness has generally not been utilised in low income countries, partly because their views about involvement in mental health services has not been explored. Hence, the aim of this study is to provide information on caregivers' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards occupational therapy in mental health practice in Zimbabwe.

**Methods:** This study utilised a descriptive cross sectional study design. Consecutive sampling of 62 caregivers of patients with mental illness was done. A researcher administered adapted KAP questionnaire was used to collect data. Data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel 2013 and SPSS version 21.

**Results:** The response rate was 87.5% (n=62). In assessing the knowledge levels, participants had slightly above half level of knowledge of the definition (57.5%) and in areas of intervention (51.6%). A positive attitude was in 65.4% of the participants. Overall perceptions were 87 %. There was a significant association between knowledge levels and attitude (p= 0.001) level of significance set at p< 0.01.

**Conclusion:** Low knowledge levels and negative attitudes affect the professional help seeking behaviour of the caregivers. Improved professional help seeking behaviour would enhance the health of the patient, caregiver. It would also ensure full utilization of OT services. Therefore mental health strategies should be put in place to improve caregivers' knowledge level, attitudes and perceptions.