

# Making it better

## Experiences of Thai caregivers in managing psychotic symptoms of persons with schizophrenia

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to describe experiences of caregivers in managing psychotic symptoms of persons with schizophrenia in various circumstances.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The data were obtained via a focus group and in-depth interviews among caregivers who cared for relatives with schizophrenia for more than five years. Thematic analysis was used for data analysis.

**Findings** – “Making it better” emerged as the main theme describing caregivers’ experiences in trying to manage psychotic symptoms. It comprises four sub-themes including cutting off the wind, protecting from harm, preventing relapses and pulling back to normality. The caregivers gradually learned and adjusted their strategies through trial and error. They tried to stop aggressive and violent behaviors soon after they had begun by giving cool water to their relatives to drink or shower, while expressing their own affect with gently talking. They also dealt with a hardship in protecting the patients, other people, their properties and their own selves from harm resulting from violent behavior. When the psychotic symptoms improved, the caregivers tried to prevent relapses by using various strategies to maintain medication adherence and by soothing their relatives’ mental state. They also tried to pull their relatives back to normal as much as they could by promoting their relatives’ memories and abilities to perform daily functions.

**Originality/value** – The findings increase knowledge in nursing regarding psychotic symptoms management. The findings can be applied to the development of a program to help caregivers to manage psychotic symptoms effectively in order to promote good clinical outcomes of patients and alleviate the caregivers’ burden.

**Keywords** Schizophrenia, Psychotic symptoms management, Thai caregivers’ experiences

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

Schizophrenia is a severe and chronic disease. In Thailand, a report from the Department of Mental Health revealed that the numbers of hospitalized schizophrenia patients increased from 42,7333 in 2013 to 44,556 and 46,837 in 2014 and 2015, respectively[1] which may reflect an increase in relapses of the disease. This may be the result of the policy of psychiatric hospitals to decrease the number of admissions and length of stay in the hospitals in order to enable patients to live in real-world circumstances. As a result,

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