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🌐 Nurses', patients', and informal caregivers' attitudes toward aggression in psychiatric hospitals: a comparative survey study

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Attitudes toward aggression is a controversial phenomenon in psychiatry. This study examined and compared attitudes toward patient aggression in psychiatric hospitals from the perspectives of nurses, patients and informal caregivers and identified factors associated to these attitudes. A total of 2,424 participants completed a self-reported instrument regarding attitudes toward aggression (12-items Perception of Aggression Scale; POAS-S). We analyzed data from nurses (n = 782), patients (n = 886), and informal caregivers (n = 765). Pearson's r correlations were used to examine associations between variables. Differences between group scores were analysed using ANOVA/MANOVA with post-hoc Sheffe tests. Multivariate logistic regression models and logistic regression analysis was used to examine the effects of respondents' characteristics on their attitudes toward aggression. Nurses had significantly more negative and less tolerate perceptions toward aggression (mean [SD] 47.1 [7.5], $p < 0.001$) comparing to patients (mean [SD] 44.4 [8.2]) and informal caregivers (mean [SD] 45.0 [6.9]) regarding a POAS-S total score. The same trend was found in dysfunction and function sub-scores (mean [SD] 25.3 [4.1] and 15.0 [3.6], respectively; the differences between groups were in both cases both was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) comparing to patients (mean [SD] 23.7 [5.3] and 14.0 [4.1], respectively) and informal caregivers (mean [SD] 24.4 [4.2] and 13.9 [3.5], respectively). The study offers new understanding of aggressive behaviour in different treatment settings where attitudes toward patient behaviour raises ethical and practical dilemmas. These results indicate a need for more targeted on-the-job training for nursing staff, aggression management rehabilitation programs for patients, and peer-support programs for informal caregivers focused on patient aggression.

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