

FC02-06 - GENDER DIFFERENCES ON THE KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE AND BELIEFS TOWARDS MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESS IN A VERY RAPID DEVELOPING SOCIETY

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Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the gender differences in knowledge, attitudes and practices toward Mental Illness in a sample of Qatari and other Arab expatriates residing in the State of Qatar.

Design: This is a cross sectional survey. Setting: Primary Health Care Centers.

Subjects: A multistage sampling design was used and a representative sample of 3300 Qatari and other Arab expatriates above 20 years of age were surveyed. Of the study sample of 3300, 2514 subjects (76.2%) expressed their consent.

Methods: Face to face interviews were based on this questionnaire that included variables on socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge, attitude and practice toward mental illness.

Results: Of the study sample, 49.2% were men and 50.8% were women. More women than men believed that mental illness is due to possession by evil spirits (43.5% vs 34.5%; $p < 0.001$). Also, less than half of the studied women (42.3%) thought traditional healers can treat mental illness. Women were considering people with mental illness as dangerous (58.1%), compared to men (51.5%) ($p = 0.001$). More than women (76.8%), men (82%) were willing to visit a psychiatrist for their emotional problems ($p = 0.002$), while more women (43.7%) preferred a traditional healer ($p < 0.001$). Women were more afraid to talk to mentally ill (39.5%) than men (28.8%) ($p < 0.001$). 24.8% of women and 31.1% of men identified schizophrenia as a common mental disorder.

Conclusion: The knowledge of women towards mental illness was poor. Most of the women were afraid and not willing to keep friendship with the mentally ill.