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IMPACT OF CARE AND SUPPORT RENDERED BY FAMILIES ON SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS FOLLOWING DISCHARGE

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Introduction: We recruited patients with schizophrenia four weeks post-discharge from Zomba mental hospital and followed them for six months to find out if care and support had an impact on their staying well and avoid relapse in their local communities.

Objective: To establish skills and knowledge family members hold to take care of their schizophrenic relative.

Aims: We hypothesized that good support and care would be positively associated with good recovery and reduced relapse rate among schizophrenic patients.

Method: This Study was carried out in Zomba city and areas surrounding Zomba mental hospital. We used both quantitative and qualitative approach to research; simple random sampling was used to get a sample of 70 participants in this study. In-depth interviews were used to collect data from discharged schizophrenic patients while focus group discussion was used to get views of family members and nurses who take part in provision of care and support.

Results: Our findings indicate that where patients following discharge receive good support and care from family members the rate of relapse becomes low and patients also live a more productive life in society. However, 31% of family members felt they had no knowledge as how to handle their sick relative at home hence they were unsure on what to do to help.

Conclusion: We recommend to intensify carer education order to equip guardians with necessary knowledge which will in the long run reduce re-admissions and hence congestion in mental hospitals.