Background:

There are wide verities of treatment facilities for mental illness available in present days. But still, the effective treatment for mental illness is a big challenge and treatment non-adherence is the prime issue in this regard. Treatment non-adherence leads to a wide range of negative consequences to patients as well as to their family members. The family members play a vital role in various aspects of the treatment process of a person with mental illness like, in administering the medication, follow-up with treatment team, maintenance of self-care, rehabilitation, identifying the side-effects of drug, identifying the symptoms of relapse and relapse prevention of persons with mental illness etc. However, awareness about mental illness is found unsatisfactory among the family members having a person with mental illness to carry on these roles. Hence, there is an urgent need to improve the treatment adherence of persons with mental illness and the knowledge of family members regarding mental illness. Few studies have been conducted in India pertaining to the issues but a very scanty numbers has been conducted in the North East Region of the country. In spite of being the matter of huge importance, very limited numbers of studies have been conducted to find an evidenced base for dealing with the problems of treatment non-adherence of persons with mental illness and unawareness of their family members about mental illness. Keeping all these issues in view, the research was conducted with the aim to find out the effectiveness of specific
nursing strategies on treatment adherence of persons with mental illness and knowledge of their family members regarding mental illness in Sonitpur District, Assam.

Methods: A pre-experimental one group pre test and post test design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted at the outpatient department of Lokoprio Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (LGBRIMH), Tezpur. Total 100 persons with mental illness diagnosed as F20 to F39 and their family members attending the OPD of LGBRIMH and fulfilling the selection criteria were the sample of the study. Non-randomized convenience sampling method was used to select the study participants. The socio-demographic data were collected with a two part Socio-demographic data sheet, treatment adherence was assessed with Medication Adherence Rating Scale (MARS) and Treatment Adherence Check-list (TAC); and knowledge of mental illness was assessed with Knowledge of Mental illness Questionnaire in the study. The interventions with specific nursing strategies were administered in two sessions in a single day following the pre-test. The Specific nursing strategies included structured psychoeducation regarding mental illness, distribution of information booklet, demonstration of preparation and use of pill box, explanation of memory cues and counseling addressing the subjective causes of non-adherence. The data were collected before the interventions and two times after the interventions, once after one month and once after six month of interventions to find the difference.

Results:

The descriptive analyses showed that, the mean score of MARS was 7.02±2.08 out of maximum score 10 and mean score of TAC was 13.61±3.25 out of maximum score
18. Mean score of knowledge regarding mental illness in family members was found to be $32 \pm 6.93$ out of maximum score 46. The inferential statistics revealed effectiveness of the specific nursing strategies in terms of enhancing the treatment adherence in persons with mental illness ($F=31.72$, $p=0.000$ for MARS score and $F= 22.83$, $p=0.000$ for TAC score) and knowledge about mental illness among their family members($F=83.28$, $p=0.000$). The improvement was found significant in first follow up but showed static or declined after six months of interventions. Socio-demographic variables of persons with mental illness like marital status, religion, family type and educational levels were found to be associated with treatment adherence ($\chi^2 =4.803$, $p=0.028$; $\chi^2=3.957$, $p=0.047$; $\chi^2 =6.585$, $p=0.01$; and $\chi^2 =5.315$, $p=0.021$ respectively). Also the gender of family members and relationship with patients were found to be associated with knowledge of mental illness ($\chi^2=5.256$, $p=0.022$; $\chi^2 =10.423$, $p=0.005$ respectively) in family members.

**Conclusion:**

The present study results have offered an evidence base for the psychiatric nursing interventions in improving the treatment adherence of person with mental illness and knowledge of their family members which is the prime issue in recovery from the illness. The evidences from the results will help the psychiatric nurses to provide quality care to their clients with issues of treatment adherence and lack of knowledge regarding mental illness.

**Key word:** Treatment adherence; Knowledge about mental illness; Family members; Persons with mental illness; specific nursing strategies.