

THE ATTITUDES OF REGISTERED NURSES TOWARD DEVALUATION AND DISCRIMINATION OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

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Background and Significance

- Almost 1 adult out of 5 has a mental illness
- Effective treatments exist
- Only 39% of people with diagnosed mental illness receive treatment
- Of those who receive treatment, 1 in 5 terminates treatment prematurely

Barriers to Seeking Help

- No perceived need
- Deal with the problem on one's own
- Structural barriers
- **Providers' attitudes:**
 - *Condescending*
 - *Feeling blamed for the illness*
 - *Deserving the illness*
 - *Considered to be attention seeking*
 - *Hearing sarcastic comments*
 - *Being disrespected*
 - *Being ignored*

General Population Attitudes

- Stereotyping beliefs – dangerousness
 - *People with schizophrenia more dangerous than those with depression*
 - *Higher familiarity with mental illness associated with lesser stereotyping*
- Stigmatizing action measured with the desire for social distance scale (SDS)
 - *Greater social distance from a person with schizophrenia than depression*
 - *Familiarity with mental illness – lesser desire for social distance*
 - *Dangerousness – more social distance*

Healthcare Providers' Attitudes

- Providers' attitudes:
 - *More negative attitudes toward a person with schizophrenia than depression or diabetes*
 - *Familiarity – positive attitudes*
 - *Desire for social distance*
- Mental health providers had more positive attitudes than primary care providers
- What are nurses attitudes toward mental illness?

Setting

- A 270-bed psychiatric hospital in Westchester county, NY
- Daily census 220 patients
- Average length of stay: 7 days



Methods

- Recruitment
 - *IRB approval from Columbia and Cornell*
 - *Local co-investigator (MG)*
 - *Email to staff*
 - *Presentation to patient care directors*
- Data collection
 - *Paper based survey, returned via inter-office mail, distributed in staff mailboxes*
 - *One demographic survey*
 - *Devaluation – Discrimination questionnaire*

Devaluation Discrimination Questionnaire

- 12 items
- 4 point-Liker type scale (*Agree = 1 to Strongly disagree = 4*)
- 6 items reversed scored
- Scoring: add and divide by 12
- Scores above 2.5 indicate beliefs in devaluation and discrimination
- Cronbach α in this study = .81
- Mean score in this study = 2.6

Clinical vs Administrative Staff

- Clinical staff > administrative staff ($p < .05$)
- Most people would willingly accept a former mental patient as a close friend 2.61 (.69) vs 2.08 (.65); $p = .001$
- Once they know a person was in a mental hospital, most people will take his or her opinions less seriously: 2.61 (.70) vs 2.13 (.61); $p = .002$
- Most employers will hire a former mental patient if he or she is qualified for the job: 2.45 (.72) vs 2.08 (.58); $p = .02$
- Most people believe that a person who has been in a mental hospital is just as intelligent as the average person: 2.58 (.78) vs 2.21 (.66); $p = .03$

Results

DD Scores by Statement

- Most people would not hire a former mental patient to take care of their children, even if he or she had been well for some time - $DD_6 = 2.93 (.72)$
- Most people would accept a fully recovered former mental patient as a teacher of young children in a public school - $DD_4 = 2.89 (.74)$
- Most young people would be reluctant to date someone who has been hospitalized for a serious mental illness - $DD_{11} = 2.80 (.78)$

Discussion

The closer the contact with a person with mental illness, the strongest the belief in devaluation and discrimination.

- Clinical staff – longer exposure to patients with mental illness
- All respondents – more intimate the contact, the more devaluation and/or discrimination

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Questions?

