De-stigmatization of Mental Illness and Addiction

Kent-Wilkinson, A., Blaney, L., Groening, M., Santa Mina, E., Rodrigue, C., & Hust, C.

DEFINITIONS

- Stigma refers to negative, unfavourable attitudes and the behaviour they produce. Stigma is a form of prejudice that spreads fear and misinformation, labels individuals and perpetuates stereotypes (Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], 2013).
- Stigma against people with mental illnesses is oppressive and alienating; stigma prevents people from accessing help (MHCC, 2013).
- De-stigmatization of mental health and addiction is needed globally!

STATISTICS IN CANADA

- One in five Canadians (20%) are estimated to experience a mental health disorder throughout their lifetime (CMHA, 2014; MHCC, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2013; Smetanin et al., 2011). One in four people globally live with mental illness or 450 million people (WHO, 2001).

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Reducing stigma in society requires a change in behaviour and attitudes – where acceptance, respect and equitable treatment of people living with mental illnesses is assured (Smith & Khanlou, 2013).

STRATEGY

The first Mental Health Strategy for Canada published by MHCC (2012a) noted:

- “Despite mental illness being a common problem, mental illness continues to be met with widespread stigma in hospitals, workplaces and schools, and in rural and urban communities” (MHCC, 2013, p. 1).
- Nurses are a target population in anti-stigma campaigns (MHCC, 2012b).

Nursing, is an influential and strong stakeholder that can affect change in mental health care; nursing programs would benefit from a uniform educational process (Kent-Wilkinson, 2016).

GLOBAL PROBLEMS

- Mental health & addiction-related discrimination and stigma are global, multi-faceted problems (Gronholm et al., 2017).

CONTACT INFO

- ‘Arlene Kent-Wilkinson’ arlene.kent@usask.ca
- ‘Leigh Blaney’ leigh.blaney@viu.ca
- ‘Marlee Groening [VC]’ marlee.groening@vch.ca
- ‘Elaine Santa Mina’ esantami@ryerson.ca
- ‘Carmen Rodrigue’ ccrrodrigue66@gmail.com
- ‘Carmen Hust’ hustc@algonquincollege.com

See Handout for References

ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGNS

A number of anti-stigma campaigns in Canada are gaining momentum:

- Partnership Program (Schizophrenia Society of Canada, since 1999).
- Elephant in the Room Campaign (Mood Disorders Society of Canada [MDSC], since 2006).
- Mental Health First Aid (Started in Australia in 2002; MHCC, since 2007).
- Opening Minds Initiative: 10-Year Anti-Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Campaign (MHCC, since 2009).
- Bell Let’s Talk (Bell Canada, since 2010).

EDUCATIONAL NEED

Nurse educators may be perpetuating societal stigma if there is limited exposure to the lives of persons and families experiencing mental health problems in nurse education curricula.

The need for the education of future nurses to have solid knowledge, judgment, abilities and skills in mental health and addiction is reflected in the CASN/CFMHN’s (2015) Competencies which is aligned with the CFMHN (2014) Canadian Standards.

GLOBAL

- Mental health & addiction-related discrimination and stigma are global, multi-faceted problems (Gronholm et al., 2017).