TABOO TOPICS: THE INFLUENCE OF STIGMA ON HELP SEEKING

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Why is there stigma against mental health issues?
How does the stigma effect patient’s seeking help?
What can be done to eliminate the stigma and encourage people to seek help?

Focusing on four areas:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sexual Assault
- PTSD
WHAT IS STIGMA?

- “The negative attitude (based on prejudice and misinformation) that is triggered by a marker of illness”

- “A sign of disgrace or discredit, which sets a person apart from others”

- A negative belief about a particular group of people
TYPES OF STIGMA

- **Perceived Stigma**
  - “the level of stigma that [people] believe is held by the greater community towards a certain group of people”

- **Personal Stigma**
  - A person’s “own attitude towards a certain group of people”

- **Self-Stigma**
  - “the stigma or shame a person feels about their own condition”
WHAT DOES STIGMA CAUSE?

- Shame
- Blame
- Secrecy
- Isolation
- Social Exclusion
- Stereotypes
- Discrimination
- “Black Sheep of the Family” Role^2
POPULATION

- 26.2% of adults over the age of 18
- 20% of those ages 13 to 18
- 13% of those ages 8 to 15

SEEKING TREATMENT

- 60% of adults with a mental illness did not pursue treatment in the last year
- Roughly 50% of those between the ages of 8 and 15
It has been found that 90% of those that commit suicide have or meet criteria for one or more mental disorders. ⁴
1 in 10 Americans are currently affected by Depression\(^5\)

- Women
- Persons without a high school diploma
- Persons between the ages of 45-64

Predict that Depression will be the second most common health problem in the world by the year 2020\(^5\)

- Originally known as “melancholia” \(^6\)
- Recorded as far back as 6000 years ago \(^6\)
- Classified in the DSM in 1952 \(^6\)
DEPRESSION STIGMA

- Weak
- Lazy
- People believe they should “suck it up”
- Hard to be around/talk to
- “Emo”
- Suicidal
ANXIETY

- 18.1% of those over the age of 18\textsuperscript{8}
  - 36.9% are receiving treatment
  - Only 34.3% are receiving minimally adequate treatment

- Started to be separated from Depression in the 17th Century
- Did not become a standalone disorder until the 1800s\textsuperscript{8}
ANXIETY STIGMA

- Poor employees
- Danger to others
- Condition is shameful/embarrassing

- “Anxiety is not a real illness”
- “condition is the fault of the person”
- “person can ‘snap out of it’ if they wished”
- “Sign of weakness, laziness, instability, and self-absorption”
SEXUAL ASSAULT

- 1 in 4 undergraduate women have been sexually assaulted \(^9\)
- 1 in 6 will be assaulted in their lifetime
- 1 in 33 men will be assaulted in their lifetime
- Less than half of all sexual assaults will ever be reported
- The FBI ranks rape as the second-most violent crime \(^10\)
SEXUAL ASSAULT STIGMA

- Dirty
- Tainted
- Derogatory terms such as slut or whore
- The victim was “asking for it” \(^{10}\)
- Although sexual assault is not a mental health diagnosis, it can be associated with the onset of Depression, Anxiety, or PTSD \(^{11}\)
Military Sexual Trauma – a woman in the military is nearly 180 times more likely to have been sexually assaulted than to have died while deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{12}
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

- Can be traced as far back as Homer’s Iliad $^{13}$
  - Not classified in DSM until the 1980s

- Frequently seen in military veterans

- 15-17% of those returning from OEF/OIF show symptoms $^{13}$
  - Men in the military are 4 times more likely to develop PTSD
  - Women are twice as likely
PTSD STIGMA

- Crazy
- Violent
- Unstable
- Unreliable
- Dangerous

IN MILITARY VETERANS
- Believe that the public thinks they caused their own illness because they volunteered for the military \(^{14}\)
Not uncommon for healthcare professionals to use stigmatizing or derogatory words towards patients.¹

People avoid mental health services because they fear confidential information may become known to others.¹⁵

Some have refused to treat...
CONCLUSIONS

- “Psychophobic” \(^2\)
  - Politically correct language has helped fight discrimination

- Education is necessary \(^{15}\)
  - “provides information so the public can make more informed decisions about mental illness”
  - Know more about the disorder
  - Know more about the stigma that goes with it
“To change others’ minds, we must first change our own.”

-Allison Abrams


National Institute of Mental Health. (2014). What is anxiety disorder?.


http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/last-taboo-breaking-down-stigma-of-depression-0821136


THANK YOU!!