

The Impact of Stigma on the Course of Mental Illness: A Brief Review

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Abstract : Introduction: Stigmatization is a common problem to overcome for people suffering from chronic diseases. It usually follows mental disorders and complicates the course of illness and reduces quality of life for people with mental illness. Objective: unsystematic review concerning stigma and mental illness, its impact on psychiatric disease and strategies to eradicate stigma. Methods: A search was conducted on PubMed, using keywords 'stigma' and 'mental illness'. Results and Discussion: Stigma is a psychosocial process that identifies individuals by the negative label of their differences. Stigma often brings a loss of occupational success and social support, reduced functioning and lower quality of life. The sense of stigma is common in individuals with mental illness and has considerable negative repercussions: delays treatment achievement, promotes social isolation, stress and maladaptive coping behaviors and it is associated with higher symptom levels, placing these individuals at higher risk for a poorer outcome and prognoses. Conclusion: Given the interrelation between stigma, symptoms, treatment seeking and disease management, stigma is a key construct in mental illness upon which anti-stigma initiatives may have considerable therapeutic potential. It will take multidisciplinary interventions to overcome mental illness stigma, including changes in social policy, attitudes and practices among mental health professionals, liaison between general public and people with a mental illness under conditions of equity and parity, family support, and easy access to evidence-based treatments.

Keywords : discrimination, stigma, mental illness, quality of life

Conference Title : ICMH 2017 : International Conference on Mental Health

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : May 21-22, 2017