



Stigma and Medication-Assisted Treatment

Laura Lander, MSW, LICSW

Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry, WVU

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Overview



- Who is effected and how
 - Diagnosis
 - Treatment
- Stigma
 - What it is
 - Looking at language
 - How we can impact it

+ Who is affected

- Stigmatization of individuals with SUDs
- Stigmatization of individuals receiving MAT
- Stigmatization of pregnant women
- Stigmatization of docs prescribing MAT
- Stigmatization of providers involved in MAT programs

How does this impact access to treatment?



+ Drug Addiction

Moral Model

- “It’s a lifestyle choice”
- “People choose to drink and use drugs”
- Self-destructive, immoral, irresponsible, frustrating, revolting, lying, thieving, cheating, criminal, willful misanthropes

Bad People

Disease Model

- “Substance Use Disorders are a brain disease”
- Choice is impaired by the midbrain “hijacking” the prefrontal cortex
- Craving is true suffering

Sick People



What is Stigma



- An attitude, behavior or condition that is socially discrediting
- Patients with substance use disorders report feeling:
 - Discriminated against – 60%
 - Feared – 46%
 - Abandoned – 45%

(Brener, 2010)
- Research shows that Addiction is the most stigmatized condition world wide (Room, 2005)
 - Even among health care providers
 - More stigmatized than other mental health conditions

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Why reducing stigma matters



- World wide alcohol kills 3.3 million people a year, 350,000 die due to illicit drugs (WHO, 2015)
- 23 million people in the US have a substance use disorder
- Economic cost attributable to substance use disorders as a result of lost productivity, health care costs and criminal justice - \$600 billion
- Despite 14,000 treatment facilities, 100,000 recovery support chapters meeting weekly in the US, only 10% of people receive help

Main barrier to seeking and receiving help is stigma

+ Stigma by self and others



Systematic review of 28 studies looking at health care personnel who work with individuals with SUDs (Boekel, 2013)

- Health Care Professionals –
 - Hold patients with SUDs in poor regard relative to other patients
 - View them as poorly motivated, violent, manipulative
 - May avoid these patients leading to shortened visits and suboptimal care
- Addicted individuals –
 - Less likely to seek help due to perceived stigma, discrimination, feeling feared, abandoned and more likely to drop out of treatment due to stigma

+ What factors influence stigma

Cause	Controllability	Stigma
“It’s not their fault”	“They can’t help it”	Decreases
“It is their fault”	“They really can help it”	Increases



Reducing Stigma



- Stigma occurs at many levels
 - Public
 - Private
 - Personal
- Stigma becomes a barrier to acknowledging the problem and accessing help and remaining in treatment
- Stigma has a negative impact on provider motivation to treat individuals with SUDs
- Stigma about SUDs reinforces the misperceptions about cause and controllability

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Stigmatizing language and transmission of bias (Goddu, 2017)



- Stigmatized populations receive poorer quality of care
- Health care providers can transmit the bias that accompanies stigma or work to change those biases through the language we use
- Exposure to stigmatizing language both in person and in the medical record impact provider attitudes and treatment of individuals with SUDs
- Attention to language used in person and in the medical record can promote patient-centered care, improve treatment and reduce stigma

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Looking at our language



- Addict, abuser
- Clean/dirty urine
- Replacement therapy
- Drug habit
- War on drugs
- “Hello, my name is John and I am an addict”
- Person in active addiction
- Positive/negative urine
- Medication-assisted treatment
- Substance Use Disorder
- Prevention, harm reduction, treatment
- “Hello, my name is John and I am a person in recovery”



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Stigma Summary



- Language influences perceptions and can effect policy and clinical care
- Factors that impact stigma
 - Beliefs about cause and controllability
 - Its not their fault, they cant help it – stigma decreases
 - It is their fault, they really can help it – stigma increases
- Combatting stigma involves
 - Education about the disease model of addiction
 - Personal awareness (of own biases)
 - Shift in terminology and language used

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Instill Hope



HOPE
is the little voice you
hear whisper "maybe"
when it seems the entire
world is shouting "no!"



Useful References



- Boekel et al. Stigma among health care professionals towards patients with substance use disorders and its consequences for healthcare delivery: Systematic review. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. 2013. 131:23-35.
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