

## STIGMATISING ATTITUDES OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, FORENSIC PSYCHIATRIC PROFESSIONALS AND GENERAL PRACTITIONERS: A PILOT STUDY

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**Objective:** Studying stigma in health care professionals may be helpful to address stigma in people with mental illness. The purpose of this study is to assess (stigmatising) attitudes of mental health care professionals (MHC), forensic psychiatric professionals (FP) and general practitioners (GP) in the Netherlands.

**Method:** The Mental Illness Clinicians Attitude (MICA) questionnaire is used to assess stigmatising attitudes in three different groups of health care professionals. Scores range from 16 (minimum stigma) to 96 (maximum stigma). Additionally, background information was obtained including gender, age, work and personal experience.

**Results:** All three groups of health care professionals had a positive attitude towards psychiatry and patients with a mental health problem. However, the total MICA score differed significantly between the three groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). GP's had the highest score (44) on stigmatising attitudes, followed by the FP's (39) and MH's (34). In our study population 25%-38% had personal experience with having a mental illness. Most stigmatising attitudes were found regarding protection of the public against patients with severe mental illness, telling colleagues about personal experience with mental illness and, appreciating psychiatry as less respectable compared to other medical disciplines.

**Conclusion:** General practitioners showed in comparison to mental health care professionals a significantly higher stigmatising attitude. The scores still represent a mild positive attitude towards psychiatry and psychiatric patients. Although all three groups have a relatively positive attitude, there is still room for improvement.