

## P-1307 - BEING IMMUNE TO STIGMA AND BEING ABLE TO COUNTERACT IT

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**Background:** Stigma resistance, an individual's capacity to counteract the stigma of mental illness, emerged as a separate construct (Sibitz et al. 2011). However, genesis and importance of this new construct in schizophrenia have not been explored systematically.

**Methods:** Transcripts of recorded interviews with 32 people with schizophrenia were coded and analysed thematically using a modified grounded theory approach.

**Results:** Stigma resistance varied from individual to individual and changed over time. Happy childhood, supportive family, friends, work and activities facilitated development of stigma resistance and being open about the disorder. Conversely, lack of money, lack of possibilities and a stigmatising environment led to low self-esteem and closeness. It was considered helpful to expose oneself to possibly stigmatising situations, but to save oneself situations that were almost certainly harmful. Negative experiences with being open about the mental disorder towards new friends and partners led to selective openness. Other strategies to counteract stigma were humour, degradation of others, ignoring, being quick-witted, information and fighting negative attitudes. Also, the amount of stigma resistance varied depending on the clinical condition and the acceptance of the disorder and its consequences.

**Conclusions:** Stigma resistance is a significant and complex issue. Further research should focus on the development of a robust scale for the assessment of stigma resistance to prove its value as an independent variable, as well as an outcome variable of therapeutic interventions and public health action.

Sibitz I, Unger A, Woppmann A, Zidek T, Amering M. Stigma resistance in patients with schizophrenia. *Schizophr Bull* 2011; 37:316-323.