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## STIGMA IN MENTAL HEALTH: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS WHO WILL BE FUTURE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A.J. Marques<sup>1</sup>, T. Barbosa<sup>2</sup>, C. Queiros<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Allied Health Sciences - Porto Polytechnic Institute, Vila Nova de Gaia,

<sup>2</sup>Psychiatric Department of S. Joao Hospital E.P.E., <sup>3</sup>Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - Porto University, Porto, Portugal

**Introduction:** Actually, in society, stigma against mental illness stills strong, making difficult to develop recovery and social integration of people suffering from mental illness, witch affects their well-being and quality of life. Studies indicates that stigma can be elicited by different social groups, which include, in addition to the general population, the relatives, the individuals with mental illness and event health professionals (Schulze, 2007).

**Aims:** Compare attitudes and stigma against mental illness from students who will work in mental health teams.

**Methods:** Data were collected using a translation of Attribution Questionnaire - AQ 27 (Corrigan, 2003), fulfil in an anonym way from 486 Portuguese students of Medicine, Psychology, Occupational Therapy and Nursing. The sample was composed by 22% male and 78% female; mean age 20.4 years, 65% at begging of the course and 35% finishing.

**Results:** The data reveal that the sample has little contact with mentally ill individuals (only 19% have relatives with mental illness). Students from Medicine and Psychology present higher values in stigma dimensions, while Occupational Therapy and Nursing show lower values. Students begging the course shows higher stigma than those finishing. Having regular contact with mentally ill individuals seems to decrease stigma attitudes.

**Conclusions:** Some attitudes related to stigma were found, contradicting the actual knowledge about mental illness and politics of social inclusion. It seems necessary to modify theoretical topics about mental illness learned by students, and also pedagogical methods. Therefore, stigma and social exclusion will be discuss and avoid since the beginning of the courses.