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THE IMPACT OF HOSPITALISATION ON DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCES

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Background: The aim of the study was to assess the experiences of discrimination as reported by people with mental health problems and to explore the impact of hospitalisation.

Methods: 306 people with mental health problems provided sociodemographic data and data on discrimination using the discrimination and stigma scale version 12 (DISC-12) with the domains negative experienced discrimination, anticipated discrimination, overcoming stigma and discrimination, and positive experienced discrimination. Logistic regression analysis was used to test the impact of hospitalisation on discrimination, controlled for age, gender, education, employment, diagnosis and having been prescribed medication.

Results: Hospitalisation had a major impact on negative discrimination: People were more likely to be treated unfairly in making or keeping friends, in marriage or divorce, by people in their neighbourhood, in social life, by mental health staff and in terms of privacy, if they had been hospitalised. They were also more likely to be avoided or shunned by people who knew about the mental health problem. People with a history of hospitalisation also reported more anticipated discrimination: They had stopped themselves more often from having a close personal relationship and concealed their mental health problem from others more often than those without a history of hospitalisation. However, people who had been hospitalised also experienced more positive discrimination in terms of being treated more positively in getting welfare benefits or disability pensions and in housing.

Conclusion: Findings suggest that treatment in hospital contributed to a higher extent to experienced discrimination than treatment in the community.