



# The experience of users and carers in Andalusia (Spain): health professionals and stigmatisation

Garcia-Cubillana P, Runte A, Bono L, Mena AL, Fernandez G

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the Andalusian mental health services users and their carers, **stigma may be reduced by:**

- Giving **appropriate information** concerning diagnosis, medication, psychosocial aspects and resources
- More **person-centred treatment** in outpatient clinics
- **Training non-clinical staff** such as the elderly staff and security guards
- Changing the **in patient procedures** and specially the use of **compulsory measures**
- Improving the **therapeutic atmosphere** and the living conditions at the psychiatric wards

## AIM

To identify and describe the different aspects of stigmatisation of people with mental illness **generated by professionals** of the Andalusian Public Health System.

To know the **opinions** from **users** and **carers** in their own voice, in order to **produce anti-stigma materials** addressed to professionals.

## METHOD

Review of studies about users and carers experiences of stigma carried out in Spain and **identify the main sources of stigmatisation** in the health system.

Interviews in 3 **focus groups** (14 patients and 10 carers) in order to obtain **first hand and in-depth information** from users and carers. The patients were suffering from severe mental illness and had been hospitalised at least once in the last 3 years.

## RESULTS

An important part of the social stigmatisation comes from the health professionals, specifically from the mental health services.

**Poor information** received regarding **diagnosis, medication, available resources** and the psychosocial aspects and **changes generated by the illness** are key.

**Carers** regret the limited information they receive and demand a **better accessibility to psychiatrists** as they have an important role in the care.

The relationship with **nurses** was **highly positive** and experienced as a great help.

**Negative attitudes** showed by psychiatrists and other professionals, especially the **orderly staff**, is seen as a core problem to face the reality of the illness and generates self-stigma.

The in patient procedures and **specially the use of compulsory measures**, with the participation of police agents and the orderly staff, is one of the hardest parts of the contact with the mental health system.

The experience of the in patient, with a lack of therapeutic atmosphere and poor living conditions at the psychiatric wards are believed to be a cause of stigmatisation. **They feel discriminated compared with other patients.** Mental health should be put at the same level with other specialities.