



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

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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.