

## Difference in Attitude of Interns towards Psychiatric Illness and AIDS: Two Diseases Affected With Stigma

Abhijit Chakraborty\*, Debshankar Mukhopadhyay, Alok kumar Mandal, Prof. Srijit Ghosh

Department of Psychiatry, Calcutta National Medical College, Kolkata, West Bengal India

\*Corresponding author: Abhijit Chakraborty  
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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Attitude of doctors towards a specific illness play major role in the care of patients. Internship, the final stage in MBBS training is important in developing attitudes towards different diseases. Psychiatric illnesses itself have stigma among doctors too. In our country there are little studies comparing the medical illness and psychiatric illness. In this study we tried to explore the attitude of interns towards Psychiatric illness and a chronic medical illness (AIDS). Both the diseases are affected with stigma and negative attitudes both in common people and also among doctors. Total 136 interns who had completed their Psychiatric posting were included in this study. Medical Condition Regard Scale was used to assess the attitude towards the specific illness. The attitude of interns towards Psychiatric illness was favorable than the attitude towards Diabetes Mellitus.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Interns, AIDS, Psychiatric illness.

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## INTRODUCTION

Internship is mandatory before obtaining a MBBS degree in which students are exposed to various disciplines throughout their tenure of one year. It develops their skills in understanding various diseases as well as their own preferences and attitudes. This attitude has a direct bearing on the care of the patients. Patient care is expected to be good with positive attitude [1].

Psychiatry is plagued by negative attitude [2] and stigma not only in general public, but also among medical professionals [3]. The reasons may be many including lack of objectivity compared to other chronic physical illnesses or misconceptions regarding mental diseases etc[4].

There are very few studies which have assessed the difference of attitudes of doctors between psychiatric illness and a chronic physical illness [5, 6]. It has also been seen that such attitudes towards mental illness improved with more exposure [7]. So it is more rational to do a comparative study assessing this attitudes on interns after completing their Psychiatry posting, as they are unlikely will have a Psychiatry exposure unless they opt to take it as a specialization.

Keeping this background in mind this study was conducted to compare the attitude of interns

towards Psychiatric illnesses and a chronic medical illness for which we opted AIDS. Both of the diseases have stigma in common people as well as among medical professionals.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the Department of Psychiatry in a tertiary care centre of Eastern India from December 2017 to November 2018. Total 136 interns who consented were included in our study. Those who have major Psychiatric illnesses, family history of mental illness and who had previous contact with mental health professionals were excluded from this study.

A predesigned and pretested semi-structured questionnaire was used to obtain sociodemographic details of the interns. The attitude towards psychiatric illness and chronic medical illness (Diabetes Mellitus) were evaluated using Medical Condition Regard Scale (MCRS) [8]. It is a 11 item, 6 point Likert scale [Appendix-1]. Data obtained were analysed using SPSS version 20.

## RESULTS

Among 136 interns 82 were male (60.29%) and 54 were female (39.71%). Median age was 23 years, majority belong to rural background (n=96) and were Hindu (n=106) by religion.

Table 1 shows the comparison of MCRS score between psychiatric illness and AIDS. The score of five items out of total 11 items were significantly higher for psychiatric illness than AIDS. Total MCRS score for psychiatric illness was significantly higher in comparison with AIDS.

## DISCUSSION

In our study we found that the attitude of interns was more favorable than AIDS. Interns expressed more satisfaction in treating patients suffering from mental illness when compared with AIDS. A previous study has found that stigma related to

AIDS was associated with a perception of immoral behavior [9, 10], whereas psychiatric illnesses do not have these stigmagenic factors. Further many students believe that health care workers are at a greater risk when working with HIV patients [11]. This might be a cause of these favorable attitudes towards psychiatric illnesses among the interns.

Conclusions:-The attitude of interns towards psychiatric illness was favorable than towards AIDS. Further aspects of stigma and attitudes needs to be addressed to improve patient care.

**Table-1: Comparison between Medical Condition Regard Scale of Psychiatric illness and AIDS**

MCRS item	Psychiatric illness (mean score)	AIDS (mean score)	p-value
1. Working with patients like this is satisfying	5.01	4.51	0.018*
2. Insurance plans should cover patients like this to the same degree that cover patients with other conditions	5.08	4.53	0.003*
3. There is little I can do to help patients like this	3.78	3.41	0.134
4. I feel specially compassionate toward patients like this	4.54	3.99	0.011*
5. Patients like this irritates me	4.98	4.59	0.146
6. I wouldn't mind getting up on call nights to care for patients like this	4.76	4.41	0.097
7. Treating patients like this is a waste of money	5.09	5.03	0.938
8. Patients like this are particularly difficult for me to work with	4.66	4.46	0.535
9. I can usually find something that helps patients like this feel better	4.78	4.34	0.025*
10. I enjoy giving extra time to patients like this	4.73	4.33	0.026*
11. I prefer not to work with patients like this	4.98	4.88	0.322
Total	51.89	48.34	0.001*

\*p < 0.05, MCRS-Medical Condition Regard Scale

### Appendix-1: MCRS-Medical Condition Regard Scale

A B C D E F

- Working with patients like this is satisfying
- Insurance plans should cover patients like this to the same degree that cover patients with other conditions
- There is little I can do to help patients like this
- I feel specially compassionate toward patients like this
- Patients like this irritates me
- I wouldn't mind getting up on call nights to care for patients like this
- Treating patients like this is a waste of money
- Patients like this are particularly difficult for me to work with
- I can usually find something that helps patients like this feel better
- I enjoy giving extra time to patients like this
- I prefer not to work with patients like this.

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