Section on Stigma and Mental Disorders, World Psychiatric Association

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Introduction:

Stigma creates a vicious cycle of discrimination and social exclusion for those who suffer from a mental disorder and all of those who are associated with them. Stigma is the single most important barrier to quality of life of mental health consumers and family members—more so than the illness itself—and a major impediment to mental health reform and development. As the majority of people with a mental illness are now treated in community settings, negative public opinions can have potent consequences for them and their families. Consequences of stigma such as unemployment, lack of housing, diminished self-esteem, and weak social support can be major obstacles to recovery, influence long term prognosis, and promote disability. Stigma and the expectation of stigma can also produce serious disruptions in family relationships and reduce normal social interactions because of a desire for secrecy.

Activities:

The Stigma Section of the World Psychiatric Association—through its network of international members—engages in scholarly, scientific, and public health activities designed to reduce stigma and discrimination because of mental disorders and improve social inclusion for people with mental illness and their families. More specifically the Stigma Section:
Disseminates information about stigma and discrimination because of mental disorders through academic and technical publications, and through symposia and courses offered at WPA regional meetings and congresses.

Advances scientific knowledge about stigma through collaborative research and evaluation.

Provides training opportunities to support the development of effective programs to fight stigma and discrimination because of mental disorders.

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