

Symposium | Forensic Psychiatry : [Symposium 39] Beyond Barriers: The Current State and Future Challenges of Mental Health Stigma Across Countries

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[Symposium 39] Beyond Barriers: The Current State and Future Challenges of Mental Health Stigma Across Countries

Moderator: Muhammad Hanif Abd Latif (Psychiatry Department, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), Ryo Mizui (Miyagawa Medical Juvenile Training School)

[SY-39-04] Behind the White Coat: A Cross-Sectional Study on Mental Health Stigma Among Doctors in Malaysia

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Stigma against mental illness remains a formidable barrier to mental healthcare across the globe, influencing not only help-seeking behavior and treatment adherence but also social acceptance and recovery outcomes. In Malaysia, mental health stigma is uniquely shaped by a confluence of cultural norms, religious beliefs, and systemic healthcare dynamics. Stigma remains pervasive even among mental health professionals despite public awareness has increased in recent years. This study aims to explore how cultural and religious factors influence psychiatrists' attitudes toward mental illness, and to identify the underlying mechanisms that reinforce or reduce stigma within clinical settings. The research adopts a cross-sectional design and is currently in progress. Data are being collected anonymously through an online questionnaire distributed to physicians with at least one year of clinical experience in psychiatry. The instrument captures various dimensions of stigma, including stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory attitudes, as well as perceptions of societal and institutional stigma. Additional variables explore beliefs about the impact of mental illness on family reputation, treatment avoidance, and stigma within the medical profession. Particular attention is given to the association of cultural and religious beliefs in these views. Although findings are not yet available, the study's conceptual framework and methodological approach offer valuable insights into how stigma manifests in professional mental health practice in Malaysia. The presentation will also explore anticipated challenges in reducing stigma, such as limitations in training, policy gaps, and culturally ingrained misconceptions. By contextualizing stigma within Malaysia's sociocultural landscape, this research contributes to the broader global effort to develop effective, culturally responsive stigma-reduction strategies in psychiatry and mental healthcare.