
Stigma of addiction in Healthcare



JOHN LALLY APRN, MA, MSN, PMHNP-BC

Today I Matter, Inc.

“Stigma ... is the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance.”

The stigmatized individual is “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.”

Erving Goffman, 1963



Types of Stigma

PUBLIC

**Discrimination
and Devaluation
by Others**

SYSTEMIC

**Reduced Access
to Care and
Resources Due
to Policies**

SELF

**Internalization
of Negative
Stereotypes**

Recognizing our stereotypes and biases



First involvement with healthcare system



Will set the tone for beliefs about trust and acceptance



WORDS

HAVE

POWER

Avoid this

Addict, Junkie, Alcoholic, Drug Abuser
Ex-addict
Medication is a crutch
Relapsed
Dirty Urine
Stayed Clean
Drug Offender

Say This

Person with Substance Use Disorder
Person in Recovery
Medication is treatment
Had a setback
Positive drug screen
Maintained recovery
Person arrested for drug use

Do words matter to professionals?

- 516 mental health professionals read one of two vignettes and were asked to complete a questionnaire.
- substance abuser versus individual with a substance use disorder.

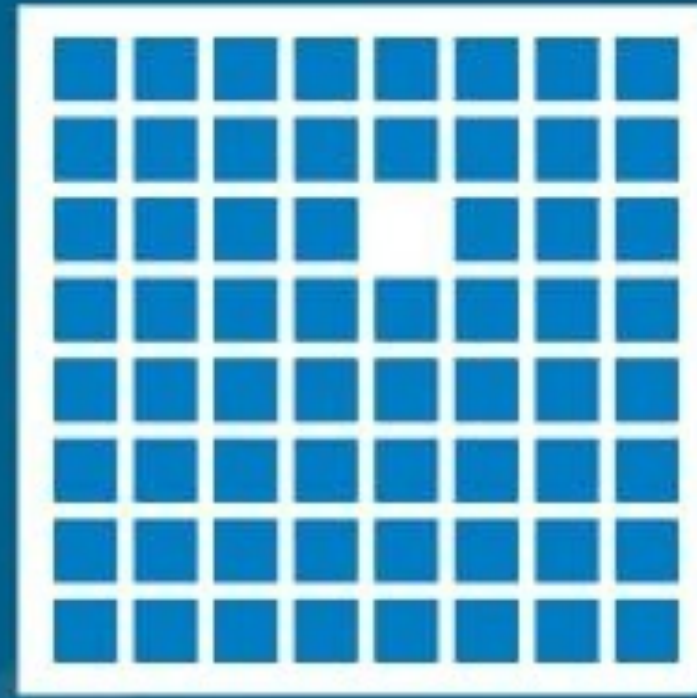
Yes, words matter to professionals!

- “**Substance abuser**” group was more likely to agree that:
 - The person was culpable
 - Punitive measures should be taken

Common Attitudes/Beliefs about this population

- Undependable
- Dishonest
- Manipulative
- Lazy
- Dirty
- Criminal
- Likely to return to use (relapse)





Ending the Stigma of Opioid Use Disorder

Improving care in the Emergency Department

Today I Matter, Inc

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- Dedicated to reducing the shame and stigma of mental illness and addiction
- through education, advocacy and support



<https://www.todayimatter.org>

References

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