

Poster presentation

Psychiatric stigma: the perceptions of a day center's patients on chronic mental illness

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Background

Negative social representations and prejudism towards mental illness are creating a social stigma. Subjective experience of the patient towards the illness together with the social discrimination is causing the phenomenon of the so called psychiatric stigma. Socialisation, self-image and self-esteem are only some of the patient's life negatively influenced by stigmatisation.

Materials and methods

The objective was to investigate the perceptions of the chronic psychotic patients towards mental illness; to correlate these perceptions with the socio-demographic characteristics, the type and the severity of the psychopathology. For this purpose, 25 patients with chronic mental disorders (aged between 28 and 60) of a Day Center, who participated in a full psychotherapeutic and rehabilitative program, completed: 1. a scale for the Assessment of Self-Stigmatisation, 2. a Compliance Questionnaire 3. the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale, 4. the Global Assessment Scale, and 5. the Calgary Inventory.

Results

Patients' social acceptance before illness was significantly greater (65.1%) in comparison with the social acceptance after illness (45.3%). The attitude towards people with psychiatric illness during the morbid period was significantly more positive (81.7%) in comparison with the pre-morbid period (57.9%). Compliance with the medical treatment is positively associated to the years of illness as well as to the patients' age. Patients that feel unaccepted have almost double the amount of hospitalizations in comparison with those who don't feel unaccepted.

Discussion

Since stigma becomes an obstacle towards the patient's psychosocial rehabilitation, understanding labelling effects on chronic mental disorders, may help the psychosocial factors related to stigma to be incorporated in the psychotherapeutic and rehabilitation programs.

References

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