

Examining Public Stigma of Schizophrenia in China

Robin Edward Gearing, Wanzhen Chen, Kathryne B. Brewer, Patrick Leung, Monit Cheung, L. Christian Carr, Gregory R. Gomez, Keri Powell, and Xuedong He | 2022

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- Stigma towards mental health and particularly schizophrenia is under-investigated in China. That stigma can affect access to mental health care and the overall well-being and functioning of individuals with schizophrenia.

KEY POINTS

- Although the Chinese government has taken measures in recent years to improve access to mental health, significant gaps remain between mental health needs and treatment. Up to 91% of adults with mental illness never received treatment.
- Across several studies, the two most significant barriers to the treatment of mental health illnesses in China are public attitudes and low perceived need for treatment.
- Co-morbid health conditions like diabetes can increase the stigma faced by those diagnosed with schizophrenia in China thus increasing attitudinal barriers.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- Chinese participants endorsed higher levels of personal and community stigma towards individuals with schizophrenia while endorsing lower levels of negative outcomes stigma.
- Gender-based differences in perception of vignette subjects suggest that Chinese men with schizophrenia may be more stigmatized than Chinese women.
- Two participant characteristics affected the level of stigma. Participants reported lower levels of stigma related to future outcomes if they personally knew an affected individual. Those who perceived the illness as more severe had higher negative expectations about the future of the vignette's subject.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

- Are the results of the study conducted in Shanghai generalizable to other Chinese cities or the Chinese population in general?
- Is there a mental health literacy gap among the Chinese population regarding serious mental health issues such as schizophrenia?
- Could China's public policy address community support for social sharing to improve treatment seeking and engaging with professionals?

“An epidemiological estimate found that 91% of 173 million adults in China with a mental disorder never received professional treatment.”

ACTION STEPS

Conducting additional research, individualized community-based interventions and increasing awareness to reduce stigma.



CONTINUE READING

Full Article

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17525098.2022.2079164>

About Dr. Robin Gearing

uh.edu/socialwork/about/faculty-directory/r-gearing/