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Perception of mental illness in the Lebanese society

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Introduction: The effect of stigma on people with mental illness is more burdening than the disease itself. In Lebanon, regarding the high prevalence of mental disorders (25%), it is important to perform studies to assess the public perception of mental disorders in order to precede better with management.

Aim & Method: The aim of the present study is to describe the perception of mental illness in the Lebanese society and evaluate its variation according to multiple factors, through a cross sectional study conducted at the “Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Notre Dame des Secours Jbeil” on hospital visitors via a questionnaire collected from 300 participants.

Results: Our results showed that positive attitudes towards mentally ill patients are correlated with high levels of mental health knowledge and high socioeconomic and educational levels. Likewise, the reported and intended behaviours towards these patients are positively correlated to attitudes towards them. These attitudes are more noticeable among participants living in Mount Lebanon than among those living in North Lebanon. No relation has been found between positive attitudes and the age or the gender of the participants. On the other hand, knowing a larger number of people having mental illness is correlated with negative attitude towards them.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the lack of effective mental health awareness is the main reason that leads to negative attitudes. Psychiatric education is a need as well as awareness campaigns to put an end to the discrimination, stigma and taboo attached to mental illness.

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