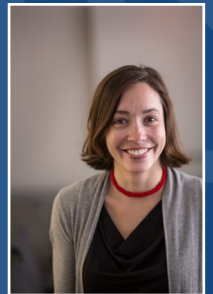




JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness and Addiction

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Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Mental Health and Addiction Policy Research

Center for Mental Health and Addiction Policy Research



JHSPH Stigma Lab



Given persisting challenges of stigma and discrimination – especially in an era when the public dialogue on mental illness increasingly focuses on violence – we are developing a robust communication research initiative.

This initiative aims to identify evidence-based anti-stigma strategies with the goal of shifting negative public views about mental illness and addiction to increase the chances that meaningful, evidence-informed policies and practices will be implemented. To stay up to date on our current research, [follow us on Twitter!](#)

FEATURED CURRENT RESEARCH

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

Two key myths:

Lack of effective treatment for mental illness and drug addiction:

- ▶ Treatment options for mental illness are not effective: 41%
- ▶ Treatment options for drug addiction are not effective: 59%
- ▶ There is a treatment for prescription painkiller addiction that is effective for a long period of time: 49%

Dangerousness:

- ▶ People with serious mental illness are far more dangerous than the general population: 40%
- ▶ People addicted to prescription opioids are far more dangerous than the general population: 56%

These views run counter to research evidence.

Kennedy-Hendricks A, Barry CL, Gollust SE, Ensminger ME, Chisolm M, McGinty EE (2017). How is social stigma toward individuals with opioid pain reliever addiction associated with public support for punitive and public health oriented policies? *Psychiatric Services*, 68 (5): 462-469.

Barry CL, McGinty EE, Pescosolido BA, Goldman HH (2014). Stigma, Discrimination, Treatment Effectiveness, and Policy: Public Views about Drug Addiction and Mental Illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 65(1): 1270-1272

Blendon RJ, Benson JM. The public and the opioid-abuse epidemic. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2018;378(5):407-411.

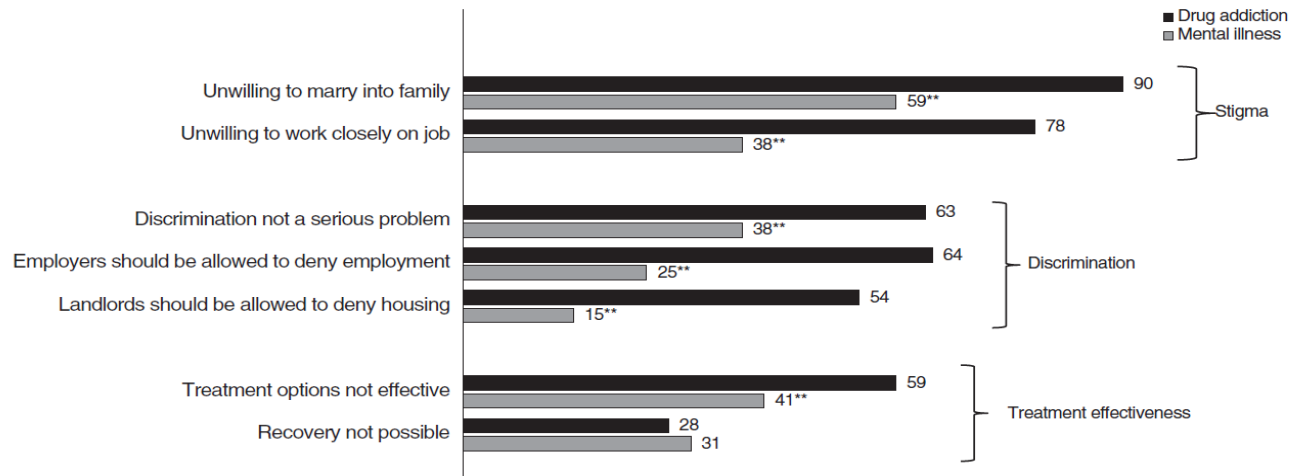
McGinty EE, Webster DW, Barry CL (2013). Effects of news media messages about mass shootings on attitudes toward persons with serious mental illness and public support for gun control policies. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170: 494-501.

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

These myths contribute to stigma toward people with mental illness or addiction

Figure 1

Public attitudes about persons with drug addiction (N=347) and mental illness (N=362), 2013^a



Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

- ▶ Stigma is correlated with support for policy.

STIGMA



Support for Public Health-Oriented Policies

- ▶ Higher stigma toward people with mental illness/opioid use disorder is correlated with lower support for public health-oriented policies:
 - Insurance parity
 - State laws expanding naloxone access
 - Good Samaritan laws
 - Increasing government spending on mental health/substance use treatment

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

- ▶ Stigma is correlated with support for policy.

STIGMA



Support for Punitive Policies

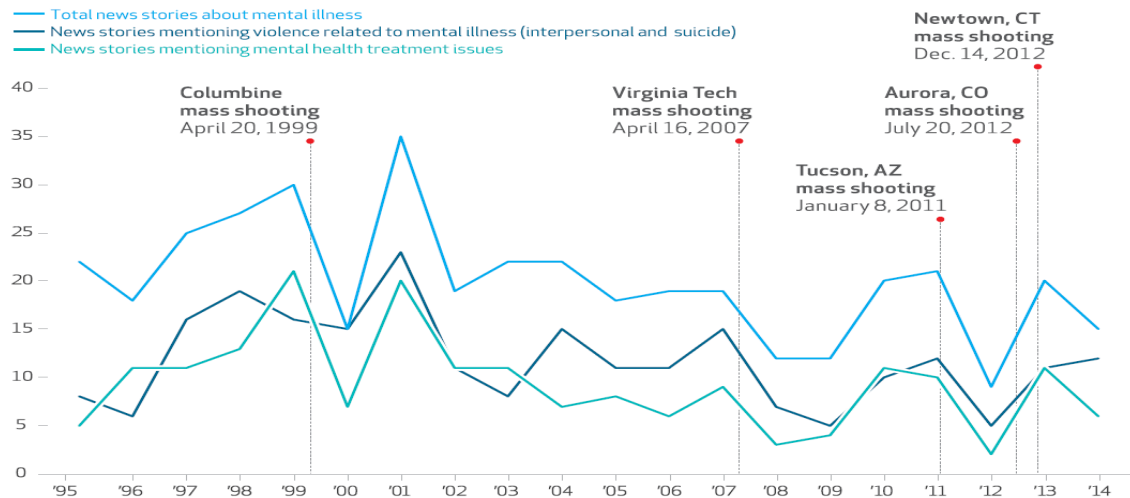
- ▶ In a nationally representative survey, higher stigma toward people with opioid use disorder was correlated with higher support for punitive policies:
 - Arresting and prosecuting individuals who obtain opioid prescriptions from different doctors
 - State laws requiring Medicaid beneficiaries suspected of opioid misuse to use a single doctor and pharmacy

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

News media coverage of mental illness

EXHIBIT 1

Volume of US news coverage focused on mental illnesses overall, by mention of violence, and by mention of treatment



SOURCE Authors' analysis of news media data, 1995-2014. NOTE N = 400 news stories.

From 1995-2014, stories about mental illness focused more on violence than on treatment

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

News media coverage of opioid addiction

Criminal Activity or Treatable Health Condition? News Media Framing of Opioid Analgesic Abuse in the United States, 1998–2012

Emma E. McGinty, Ph.D., M.S., Alene Kennedy-Hendricks, Ph.D., Julia Baller, Ph.D., Jeff Niederdeppe, Ph.D., Sarah Gollust, Ph.D., Colleen L. Barry, Ph.D., M.P.P.

The most frequently mentioned solutions to the opioid crisis were criminal justice solutions focused on arresting and prosecuting individuals responsible for the diversion and illegal sale of prescription opioids. Less than 5% of news stories mentioned the need to expand treatment.

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

News media coverage of opioid addiction

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

By Alene Kennedy-Hendricks, Jonathan Levin, Elizabeth Stone, Emma E. McGinty, Sarah E. Gollust, and Colleen L. Barry

News Media Reporting On Medication Treatment For Opioid Use Disorder Amid The Opioid Epidemic

DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05075
HEALTH AFFAIRS 38,
NO. 4 (2019): 643-651
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The People-to-People Health
Foundation, Inc.

News reporting about medication treatment for opioid use disorder increased substantially in 2015-16 relative to 2007-2014.

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

Effects of violence and treatment messages on public attitudes:

▶ Messages linking mental illness with violence increase stigma

- ▶ McGinty EE, Webster DW, Barry CL (2013). Effects of news media messages about mass shootings on attitudes toward persons with serious mental illness and public support for gun control policies. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170: 494-501

▶ Messages about societal barriers to mental health treatment (e.g., provider shortages) are just as effective as violence messages at increasing audiences' willingness to invest in the mental health system, and do not increase stigma

- ▶ McGinty EE, Goldman HH, Pescosolido BA, Barry CL (2018). Communicating about mental illness and violence: balancing stigma and increased support for services. *Journal of Health Policy, Politics and Law*, 43(2): 185-228.

▶ Depictions of successful treatment can decrease stigma

- ▶ McGinty EE, Goldman HH, Pescosolido B, Barry CL (2014). Portraying mental illness and drug addiction as treatable health conditions: effects of a randomized experiment on stigma and discrimination. *Social Science and Medicine*, 126: 73-85.

Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Illness & Addiction

In conclusion, a word about language...

- ▶ Person-centered language: “person with mental illness/opioid use disorder”
- ▶ Commonly used terms have been shown in randomized experiments to increase audience stigma toward people with drug addiction, e.g., “addict”



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Short Communication

Stigmatizing language in news media coverage of the opioid epidemic:
Implications for public health

Emma E. McGinty^{a,*}, Elizabeth M. Stone^b, Alene Kennedy-Hendricks^a, Colleen L. Barry^a



49% of news stories about the opioid crisis used a stigmatizing term; 2% used a term shown to be less stigmatizing (e.g., “addict” vs. “person with a substance use disorder”)

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Thank you!

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