



Part 2: Stigma related to perinatal mental illness

Session Aims

Understanding and challenging stigma related to PMI

1. Understanding different types of stigma
2. Acknowledging different barriers
3. Challenging stigma



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PMI Stigma and How to Reduce It

Unfortunately, some people still have a negative perception of mental illness and this can result in stigma towards people who experience mental health difficulties.

Stigma involves three different elements:

- ❖ **Stereotypes:** beliefs that are often based on exaggerations and misconceptions
- ❖ **Prejudice:** attitudes that result negativity and bias
- ❖ **Discrimination:** behaviours that result in unfair or unequal treatment.



Different Types of Stigma

Social Stigma

Social stigma (also called public or external stigma) refers to perceptions held by the general public towards the person experiencing mental illness and is largely based on misconceptions or misunderstandings. People may think that those experiencing PMI:

- Are bad or abusive parents
- Harm themselves or their children
- Don't love their children
- Are abnormal



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Different Types of Stigma: Continued

Self Stigma

Self-stigma (also called internal stigma) occurs when stigmatized individuals internalise the negative attitudes and stereotypes and apply it to themselves. People experiencing self stigma might feel:

- Guilty
- Shameful
- Isolated



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Different Types of Stigma: Continued

Disclosure Stigma

Disclosure stigma (also called treatment stigma) refers to negative perceptions around seeking professional help. Seeking help might make feel:

- Scared that Social Services will be involved
- Worried that children will be taken away from
- Guilt or shame for taking medication for PMI



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Story of lived experience



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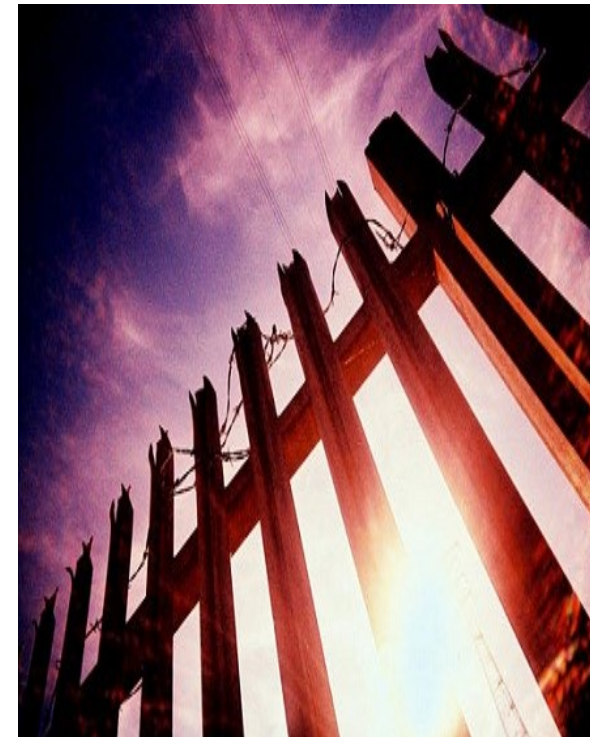
Barriers to *accessing* support

Individual level barriers

- Lack of knowledge about perinatal mental health
- Negative attitudes towards mental illness
- Fear of judgement and child being taken away
- Lack of access to: transport, phone, internet, childcare etc.
- Not having adequate space and time to talk about experiences
- Self stigma and negative beliefs

Sociocultural-level factors

- Language barriers
- Differences in cultural values



Barriers to *providing* support

Workforce level factors

- Confidence in identifying and supporting with stress, anxiety and depression
- Gaps in knowledge/training
- Attitudes
- Time pressures



Organisational-level factors

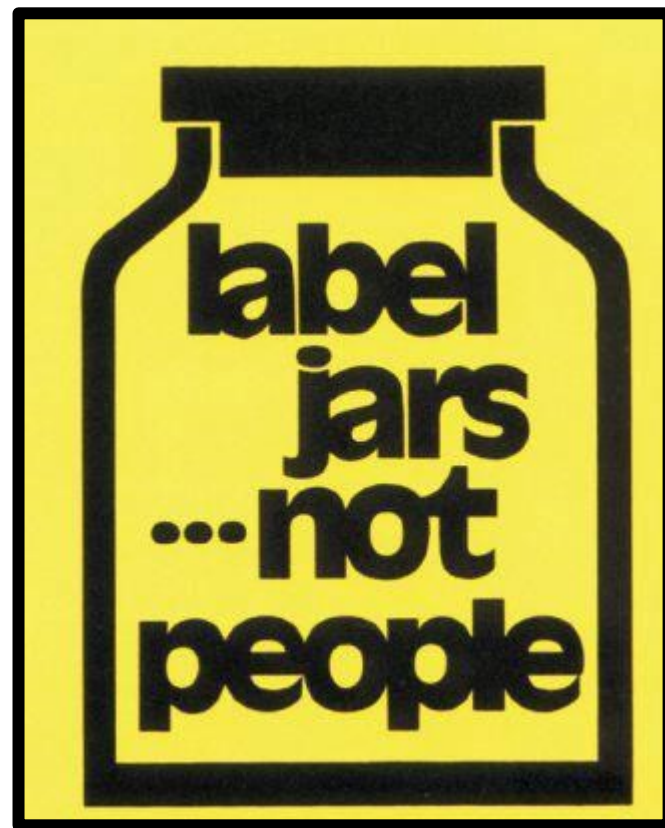
- Inadequate resources
- Fragmented services: role clarity and conflict

Structural-level factors

- Unclear policy around appropriate and acceptable use of assessment tools



How can you challenge stigma?



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Challenging stigma in your practice

- Encourage equality between physical and mental illness
- Be honest about treatment
- Advocating fair representation and treatment
- Share information with colleagues and patients to challenge stigma
- Facilitate effective communication between colleagues
- Understanding the role and impact of attitudes within family and social networks
- Be mindful about inaccurate representations or negative judgments



Challenging stigma in society

- Talk openly about mental health
- Educate yourself and others
- Be conscious of language
- Show compassion for those with mental illness
- Choose empowerment over shame
- Don't harbour self-stigma
- Reframing stigma as a social injustice and not just as a health problem



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Examples of ways you can help

When	Attitude	Outcome
First contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Express understanding that mental health care is an important part of the care providedShow willingness to address mental health concerns during care practice	Shared understanding that offering support for mental health needs are crucial to perinatal care.
During care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicate importance of assessment and screening of mental health needsBe motivated to advise and signpost to relevant sources of support	Acknowledge the importance of continued support, appropriate monitoring and non-judgemental approach in supporting mental health needs
Multi-disciplinary working	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Show willingness to work inter-professionally and share responsibilities with other HCPs regarding mental health care	Acknowledge importance of involving relevant HCPs and creating a network of support to manage mental health needs appropriately

