

Divided Health: The Negative Effect of Wrongful Mental Illness Stigmatization

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Imagine someone has a bad back. One day they might wake up and say, "Ow, I need to take it easy today." If they wake up the next day and it is worse, they might say, "Maybe I need to take some medicine today." Should it get any worse, they might say, "Okay, maybe I should go see a doctor about this pain." This is a pretty common train of thought when analyzing someone's physical health. But mental and physical health are wrongfully deemed unequal to the point of mental health stigmatization, which negatively impacts the lives of those with mental illnesses.

Why can't these same self-check questions be applied to mental health? Why can't mental health be prioritized in the same way? Historically, ideal health has been believed to be a perfect equilibrium between oneself and the outside world. Since the introduction of "an ideal human form", societies have focused on prime physical health, failing to acknowledge the equal importance of mental health. But more importantly, societies are responsible for stigmatizing mental health. Those who have suffered from mental health illnesses have been stereotyped, ostracized, and cast off by others for centuries.

Stigma towards mental health arises through the idea that mental illnesses make those who are affected, different from the unaffected. These stigmas cause the general public to build up a wall of fear and caution towards others affected by mental health. Only in the last fifty to sixty years have professional sociologists and psychologists begun publishing analyses, hypotheses, and data on the stigma that surrounds these illnesses. However, stigma drastically causes those affected by mental illness to continuously suffer without an outlet.

While mental health issues and their impact

have become far more popularized by pop culture, media, and news outlets, they can contrastingly cause more stigma. Take last year's award-winning film, *Joker*, as a prime example. Throughout the entire movie, it is very obvious how the general public views a mentally ill individual like Arthur Fleck, played by Joaquin Phoenix. He is regarded as a degenerate of society, with a palpable sense of fear in the air surrounding him. Fear that arises out of ignorance and misunderstanding of mental illness. The film reflects the inability of people to recognize mental health, and in turn, how their polarizing actions cause Arthur to stop taking medication, and embrace the madness. When the horribly traumatic events of Arthur's childhood are revealed, it should become clear to the audience that leaving the mentally ill with no outlet can permanently damage the psyche. In the case of this film, constantly feeling ostracized by society leads Arthur down the path of insanity, which in some ways accurately depicts our reality. In this way, the film raises awareness for mental health illnesses and how they can affect every aspect of one's life. Yet at the same time, it also amplifies the stigma that people have about mental health when Arthur turns violent, reinforcing the false narrative that mental illness always leads to destructive and dangerous behavior. However, it must be understood that this film simply personifies mental health stigma. What matters far more is how stigma occurs in the real world, and the actual effect it has on its victims.

Only 20% of adults with either a diagnosed or self-reported AMI (any mental illness) sought out mental health treatment in the year the illness began (CDC 2012), according to the Center for Disease Control's 2012 *Attitudes Towards Mental Illnesses*.

The CDC claims that the other 80% who did not see a professional did so out of embarrassment and fear of what others will think (CDC 2012). Simply put, the most common reason why people do not access a mental health service is the stigma that surrounds it (CDC 2012). In severe cases of mental illness, people may even permanently fall below the poverty line or commit suicide (CDC 2012). As the stigma seeps into the already suffering brain of the affected person, that individual may find it necessary to bury their symptoms or issues rather than seek help. When it roots itself deeper and deeper, the mental illness only worsens and begins to pollute the persons' entire life.

Some individuals may choose to cope with their illness by engaging in excessive eating or drinking, smoking, or drug use, instead of seeking professional help. In short, these people may adopt self-destructive tendencies as a result of stigmas that hinder their potential recovery. The stigmas cause people with mental health illnesses to feel isolated from the rest of society, even though they are just like anyone else. They eat the same food, breathe the same air, drink the same water, and have the same interests. But the fact that they struggle with anxiety or depression instantly makes them not a normal human? The lack of an outlet, and the continuous reminder that mental health issues make someone inhumane, can cause the person to develop even more life-threatening illnesses.

Craig W. Colton and Ronald W. Manderscheid's studies from 2006 reflect an increased risk of death at younger ages for people with mental illness (Colton & Manderscheid, 2006). The two doctors write in their studies, "In all eight states (tested/recorded), we found that public mental health clients had a higher relative risk of death than the general populations of their states. Deceased public mental health clients had died at much younger ages and lost decades of potential life when compared with their living cohorts nationwide" (Colton & Manderscheid, 2006). The information shows how unjust stigma prevents someone's mental recovery, and in turn, how this can alter any physical recovery or well-being. It should become clear to anyone how an imbalance in mental and physical health leads someone into a damaging spiral, where physical health suffers because of stigmatized mental health. This dependent

relationship between physical and mental health reflects how crucial each is to balancing a person's life.

Even medical professionals have been found guilty of stigmatizing patients with mental health illnesses. According to Christina Pellegrini of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, "patients who seek help for mental health problems report feeling 'patronized, punished or humiliated' in their dealings with health professionals... Discrimination can include negativity about a patient's chance of recovery, misattribution of unrelated complaints to a patient's mental illness, and refusal to treat psychiatric symptoms in a medical setting." This highlights how even at the highest level of healthcare, stigma is still prevalent. Additionally, it shows that those affected by mental health illnesses may not even receive proper treatment for their illness. Furthermore, this demonstrates how mental and physical health are wrongfully regarded as separate ideas, with physical health remaining the top priority.

Pellegrini reveals how Michael Pietrus, the head of an anti-stigma initiative, reported: "a case in which emergency physicians initially failed to investigate a patient's pain symptoms because he had a history of mental illness" (CMAJ). In the most literal sense, this reveals how someone with a mental illness is not treated the same way as someone with a physical ailment. A person with a history of mental illness caused professional doctors to discredit what the person had to say about their physical pain. More importantly, it shows that while the mentally ill may not receive proper psychiatric treatment, the stigma surrounding their illness may prevent physical treatment as well. This should make it easy to recognize how common, and damaging, mental health stigmatization is; from pop culture, to even the medical field. In a statement in the British Medical Journal, Dr. Jim Bolton calls upon medical professionals, and the human race as a whole, to "encourage an integrated biological, psychological, and social view of health care". Bolton asks us to do this by recognizing "our patients as unique individuals, and not as illnesses, it is harder to stereotype and hold stigmatizing attitudes towards mental illness" (BMJ). Bolton's ideas are important because they display a mindset that properly unifies mental and physical health, which can lead people

away from stigmatization.

But even with this guidance, the stigma persists. The stigma surrounding mental health is implicitly built into the minds of those who cannot comprehend what the illnesses actually are. The stigma you build up through news stories, movies, media, or family is what causes that other 80% of the mentally ill to not seek help. Your stigma is what builds that unnecessary wall of fear and caution. The taboo atmosphere that surrounds mental health perfectly represents people's tendency to avoid the unknown, focusing only on their physical health. "You're depressed? Oh, you must be unstable." "You're anxious? Wow, you really can't handle anything on your own, can you?" Discriminatory actions like these lead to the mentally ill convincing themselves that the stigma is justified and that the issue instead lies solely with them.

Like the depths of the ocean, the stigma is dangerous and immense. On the surface of the tide, there are those who put up a front of acceptance, of desire for change. Yet just below remains the polarizing beast. It silently waits, temporarily withholding its ferocious stereotypes and myopic ignorance. It waits for those who courageously make it past the surface, only to be repudiated once again by society. How can the mentally ill be expected to find any willpower to fight their illness, when they are not supported by society? How can we expect the mentally ill to recover when stigma and close-minded individuals make them feel like the problem? How can we expect the world's general health to improve, when we actively suppress and incorrectly label such a large part of it? Without a radical change in the way people view mental health issues, the mentally ill will continue to suffer, crash, burn, and inevitably be forgotten. Stigma is the vice that unnecessarily divides 'health' into two, leaving the mental side of it to eternally drown in false "insignificance".

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My name is Patrick Weir, and I am a current sophomore in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences studying Economics with a minor in Finance. I am 19 years old from Orangeburg, New York: a small town just north of New York City. Outside of school, I am a massive sports fan (mostly for the New York Rangers), an avid music listener of every genre, love the outdoors, and especially spending time with my family, friends, and dog, Guinness. As someone who has personally struggled with some of the issues discussed here, I am honored to be sharing this research paper with you all. My goal is to try and raise as much awareness on campus for the wrongful causes and effects of mental health stigmatization as I can.

Globalization and "Big Pharma": Roles, Relationships, and Testing Within Developing Countries

Sofia Zinis

The choices and methods of actions of large pharmaceutical corporations ("Big Pharma") can be reviewed in efforts to understand why the clinical drug trials that these companies carry out are overwhelmingly located within developing countries instead of the developed countries that house Big Pharma companies' headquarters.

Globalization and its Impact on Medicine

As the trend of globalization has developed over time, the way it has transformed the world along with the relationships between states, societies, and populations has developed and changed over time as well. The sphere of influence that globalization has today is constantly growing and extending into new territory. The premise of modern globalization is upheld on an international scale today by two principles: capitalistic market structures and the commodification of goods and services. For capitalism, in terms of economic prosperity and financial potential, the sky's the limit. The theory both requires and enables constant market expansion across all sectors of life. The commodification of materials, services, and anything the human mind can craft is a dominating way for individuals to contend with the constant need for growth that capitalism requires. Transnational corporations (TNCs) are products of capitalistic economies and global markets that allow businesses to continuously grow. They are the mega-businesses that use commodification to their advantage and treat capitalism as their ally in order to achieve economic success. TNCs have control over the majority (if not all) of global markets; medicine and science included.

Thanks to the primary factors of globalization - capitalism and commodification - medicinal cures and breakthroughs that are discovered have developed an additional importance outside of their medical benefits. For pharmaceutical companies, a large part of the motivation for medical successes can be attributed to the financial opportunity they possess.

The competition among pharmaceutical companies has produced top pharmaceutical empires that have spheres of influence that span beyond national borders. The effects that globalization has on the 'Big Pharma' industry can be seen in the geographical makeup of these transnational corporations. Pharmaceutical companies are primarily headquartered in developed countries within North America or Europe. Additional research institutions or facilities specific to companies' specializations are primarily located within these regions as well, depending on the type of pharmaceuticals a company is focused on synthesizing. Overall, pharmaceutical companies have their headquarters and administrative offices along with their synthesis labs and research facilities within nations within the most advanced societies that possess the most high tech equipment or machinery.

Meanwhile, pharmaceutical companies depend on developing countries for the mass reproduction of their medicines as opposed to the scientific creative processes of synthesizing the new compounds. Big Pharma relies on developing countries to provide resources for multiple different processes of drug production. This includes land to build factories