

COUNTDOWN

Calling time on Neglected Tropical Diseases

STIGMA, MENTAL WELLBEING AND FEMALE GENITAL SCHISTOSOMIASIS

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To be able to explain why stigma might exist in different forms (e.g. felt, feared, internalised and discrimination) and what these types of stigma may look like in relation to FGS.
- To understand what causes stigma related to FGS and the influence of societal judgements related to gender, religion, and health.
- To explore the effects of stigma, including the relationship between mental wellbeing and stigma.
- To develop skills that can support you to reduce stigma, particularly when supporting women and girls affected by FGS.
- To recognise when women and girls may need further support to improve their mental wellbeing or to seek support for gender-based violence.

ACTIVITY ONE

WHAT IS STIGMA?

- A negative response to our differences.
- They can be obvious for example name calling or making someone sit somewhere else because of who they are.

OR

- They may be well meaning intentions but where we haven't thought through the potential negative impact of our response. For example, asking them why they look like that or why they don't have children.
- When we do these things because someone has a health condition, like FGS, we call it '**health related stigma**'.

TYPES OF STIGMA

WE OFTEN LABEL OR STEREOTYPE PEOPLE. THIS CAN MAKE US TREAT THEM DIFFERENTLY AS WE SEE THE LABEL NOT THE HUMAN BEING.

EXPERIENCED STIGMA

Someone is treated differently because of their health condition. E.g. loses their job.

Gartee's husband thinks she is not a virgin or is having an affair because of the symptoms of FGS and so shouts at her.

ANTICIPATED STIGMA

When someone is scared that people will treat them differently because of their health condition

Georgina is worried that people will think she can't have children because she has had FGS and no one will marry her.

INTERNALISED STIGMA

When someone holds a negative belief about a health condition and diagnosed with it they apply these feelings to themselves.

Princess is hiding from people in her community because she thinks she has been cursed by a witch and can't have children.

ACTIVITY TWO

WHAT CAUSES STIGMA?

- A social process that lead to a group being labelled or thought of as 'different' and can lead to social isolation or rejection. Society sees people as inferior based on their difference.
- Normally because of:

**Physical
appearance**

Behaviours

**Social
characteristic
(e.g. tribe)**

SO WHY DO WE STIGMATISE?

FEAR

Catching the disease, physical impacts, of infecting others, disclosure.

UNEASE

People may not know how to react toward another person.

ASSOCIATION

Health condition perceived to be undesirable or linked to a specific job, for example, sex work, poverty. Often people are blamed for their condition.

VALUES AND BELIEFS

Religious values related to sex and marriage may cause stigma if FGS perceived as a result of infidelity. These may be unconscious thoughts or ideas.

POLICIES OR LEGISLATION

About where and how conditions are treated. Laws that are discriminatory e.g. allowing divorce as the result of a specific health condition.

USE OF INAPPROPRIATE PICTURES OF LANGUAGE, COMMENTS FROM HEALTH WORKERS

The way in which diseases are presented visually, talked about in the community and or media is important. Labelling and negative language can lead to stigma.

ACTIVITY THREE

WHO STIGMATISES?

EVERYONE

Often we don't realise we are doing it.

We might use certain words to describe people or avoid talking to someone because of a specific health condition because we do not know how to respond.

Ask yourself:

- **Would I accept a glass of water from someone who is HIV positive?**
- **Would I assume that someone who shows signs of FGS is not a virgin?**
- **Would I go for dinner at someone's house who has leprosy?**

WHO STIGMATISES?

Anthony is a health care worker who is based at the clinic. A young woman comes to him and says she has just got married but is struggling to have a child and she gets pain when she has sex. Anthony thinks he has seen this before and she must have been sleeping with other men. He believes that she has been involved in sinful behaviour. Anthony feels strongly about women who behave like this in his community and so decides not to offer her care but to ask one of his colleagues to do it instead.

- In this example, Anthony has a negative attitude toward women and girls who may be experiencing signs and symptoms of FGS.
- Anthony is stereotyping toward certain health conditions.
- Our own personal emotional reactions can compromise the type of care we provide.

ACTIVITY FOUR

THE IMPACTS OF STIGMA

Every person will experience stigma differently but often it can lead to negative thoughts and feelings. These feelings may not be constant but will depend on the situation that we find ourselves in. Stigma can often affect a person's mental wellbeing and how we respond becomes really important.

MENTAL WELLBEING

A state of **wellbeing in which the individual realises their own ability**, can manage the daily stressors of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make contribution to the community.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Comprises of the **worry, fear, sadness and insecurity often experienced by people with FGS and the associated stigma**. Can lead to reduced social functioning and self-isolation.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITY

Interaction between impairment caused by mental health conditions and barriers to participation in society experienced by many people with these conditions.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

Characterised by **changes in thoughts, perceptions, emotions or behaviour that affect relationships and ability to perform expected social roles**. Can cause significant functional impairment. For example, depression, anxiety, harmful use of alcohol.

Use the Psychological support job aid to help you follow this slide.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Think about the way that we communicate diagnosis:

Listen to patient's distress and let them ask questions

Give feedback to help them decide who they want to tell and how

Encourage expression of feelings and emotions

Share with them the facts about transmission and treatment

Help the person explore options of how they want to manage the situation

Use the diagnosis job aid to help you follow this slide.

ACTIVITY FIVE

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

People with FGS are at risk of developing mental health conditions; and people with mental health conditions are at risk of FGS. This is because many of the social factors that shape vulnerability are the same.

- Psychosocial support is a supportive relationship that involves allowing a person to address the feelings (emotions), thoughts and beliefs, behaviours and relationships that are associated with the diagnosis.
- We can provide this initial support by:
 - **Listening: pay attention to words people use.**
 - **Watching: pay attention to non-verbal body language.**
 - **Empathising: be supportive and give hope.**
- Sometimes you will identify people in psychological distress that need more support. In these cases you should refer.



Talk through the Psychological support job aid to help you follow this slide.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: WHAT IS IT?

All forms of violence and abuse can be harmful to a persons mental wellbeing.

Physical

Verbal

Emotional

Sexual

Based
on gender

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND FGS

- The examinations you will complete and questions you will ask as part of your FGS screening process may reveal signs of sexual and gender-based violence. This reveals an opportunity to refer women and girls who may be experiencing violence to the support they need.
- Supporting people affected by gender-based violence should be completed by trained health staff. As with mental health conditions, it is your job to recommend a referral (unless you have received specialist SGBV training).
- Talk through the Gender Based Violence Job Aid to help you know what to do in these situations.

1 IN 3

Women and girls will experience violence in their lifetime.

QUESTIONS?