

## **Patient-Experienced Stigma: Perceptions Regarding Obtaining Prescription Stimulant ADHD Medications**

Erin Ball, Pharm.D. Candidate [1]; Kelly Gable, Pharm.D., BCPP [1,2]; Jaron Asher, MD [2]. 1. Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) School of Pharmacy, 2. Family Care Health Centers, St. Louis, Missouri.

### **Abstract Type: Original Research**

**Background and Purpose:** The impact of stigma within mental health care has become much more widely understood. Research has shown that misperceptions and stigma are higher among adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) compared to children; however, the impact of stigma within this patient population is highly under-investigated. Our study aims to identify perceptions and experiences of stigma among adults with ADHD actively seeking treatment.

**Methods:** A sixteen-question survey was developed, focusing on ADHD diagnosis, medication acquisition, treatment process, and patient experience. Patients age 18 – 79 with a diagnosis of ADHD and actively receiving care from a psychiatric provider at a Federally Qualified Health Center in St. Louis, MO were eligible to participate. The survey was administered via phone or email between November 28, 2022 and December 16, 2022. SIUE Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the data collection process.

**Results:** Twenty-seven participants completed the survey, with 89% currently being prescribed a prescription stimulant for ADHD. Thirty-seven percent reported feeling hesitant to seek prescription stimulant treatment due to perceptions on the validity of an adult ADHD diagnosis and 35% due to concerns about being labeled as having a substance use disorder. Thirty-two percent of respondents reported feeling judgment by the pharmacist when filling their stimulant prescription and eight reported stopping their prescription stimulant because of the experience of stigma at some point during the course of their treatment. Forty-one percent have felt the need to change their prescribers in order to feel less affected by stigma. Top barriers identified in relation to obtaining prescription stimulant medications included medication not in stock at pharmacy and prior authorization requirements.

**Conclusions:** Patients with adult ADHD are at higher risk of experiencing stigma, specifically from within the healthcare system. It continues to remain a barrier toward seeking and maintaining stimulant medication treatment. Healthcare providers are encouraged to further explore the lived-experience of adults with ADHD to better understand and ultimately reduce stigmatizing behaviors that reduce patient access to quality, evidence-based care.