MOST AMERICANS recognize prescription drug misuse but many don’t know what to do about it.

Almost 19 million (7.1%) US individuals aged 12 and above misused prescription drugs in 2015. The ability to correctly identify substance abuse can help people seek out professional help earlier on. In the United States, more people associate substance abuse with biological causes, and are supportive of professional help, but stigma is still common. We conducted a national study to examine public knowledge about prescription drug misuse (PDM). Our key findings are highlighted in this document, and can help strengthen educational efforts around mental health.

RECOGNIZING PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE IN THE U.S.

After reading a short description of someone experiencing symptoms of PDM, respondents were asked to identify what they believed to be wrong with the person in the story.

32% were NOT able to identify prescription drug misuse³

68% were able to correctly identify prescription drug misuse

HOW TO HELP INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

Respondents were asked how they thought the person in the story could BEST be helped. Individuals who recognize PDM are much more likely to recommend self-help strategies than professional help.

People who did NOT identify PDM:

- 21% recommended self-help strategies
- 62% recommended professional help

People who DID identify PDM:

- 69% recommended self-help strategies
- 30% recommended professional help

STIGMA TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING PDM

Stigma is a negative and unfair belief towards a particular behavior or person.

In our survey, we asked people a series of questions to determine if they had negative attitudes towards others who demonstrated symptoms of PDM, or if they saw these negative attitudes in their community. Stigma towards substance abuse is a huge barrier to treatment, as individuals do not discuss their symptoms, and are therefore unable to get the help they need.

Individuals who recognize PDM report similar rates of stigma as individuals who do not recognize PDM.

People who did NOT identify PDM:

- 22% reported no stigma
- 78% reported some stigma

People who DID identify PDM:

- 23% reported no stigma
- 77% reported some stigma

Individuals who recognize PDM are much more likely to report stigma in their community.

People who did NOT identify PDM:

- 25% reported no community stigma
- 75% reported some community stigma

People who DID identify PDM:

- 13% reported no community stigma
- 85% reported some community stigma
MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY BY KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>76% of women identified PDM</th>
<th>74% of women expressed stigma</th>
<th>56% of men identified PDM</th>
<th>81% of men expressed stigma</th>
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<tr>
<th>Urban respondents</th>
<th>81% of rural people identified PDM</th>
<th>76% of suburban people identified PDM</th>
<th>47% of urban people identified PDM</th>
<th>83% of urban people expressed stigma</th>
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<tr>
<th>Younger respondents</th>
<th>53% of 18-34 year olds recognized stigma</th>
<th>64% of 35-54 year olds recognized PDM</th>
<th>88% of 55+ year olds recognized PDM</th>
<th>78% of 35-54 year olds expressed stigma</th>
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<tr>
<th>Households with higher incomes</th>
<th>76% of households recognized PDM</th>
<th>69% of households recognized PDM</th>
<th>60% of households recognized PDM</th>
<th>76% of households expressed stigma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Although great strides have been made in the area of mental health literacy in recent decades, the discrepancies in mental health knowledge, helping behaviors, and stigma show the importance of continuing to educate the public about mental health issues.

This document contains information that can be used to help target mental health literacy efforts. Please access www.healthbench.info for more information on current trends, trainings, and toolkits that you can use to strengthen mental health literacy in your community.

A pdf version of this document is available at healthbench.info/mh-literacy-survery.html

Mental Health Literacy-Survey.html

Our survey was conducted under the Community Assessment and Education to Promote Behavioral Health Planning and Evaluation (CAPE) program, which is dedicated to identifying and sharing best practices for benchmarking community behavioral health. To learn more about the CAPE program, contact Dr. Mark Skidmore from Michigan State University at mskidmor@msu.edu, or go to www.healthbench.info. We can also be found on Twitter (@HealthBench) and Facebook (facebook.com/healthbench.info). CAPE is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2013-48765-21544, using funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.


2The data presented in this document are based on a nationally representative web-based survey of 4,577 respondents, including 2,622 who were surveyed about depression, 647 who were surveyed about anxiety, 660 who were surveyed about alcohol abuse, and 658 who were surveyed about prescription drug misuse. The survey design is based on the work of A.F. Jorm., A.E. Korten, P.A. Jacomb, H. Christensen, B. Rodgers, and P. Pollitt. 1997. “Mental health literacy: a survey of the public’s ability to recognize mental disorders and their beliefs about the effectiveness of treatment.” The Medical Journal of Australia 164(4):182 and the work of K.M. Griffiths, H. Christensen, A.F. Jorm, K. Evans, and C. Groves. “Effect of web-based depression literacy and cognitive-behavioural therapy interventions on stigmatising attitudes to depression.” The British Journal of Psychiatry 185, no. 4 (2004): 342-349. Our survey was administered by Survey Sampling International from July 6-16, 2016, and was balanced based on income, gender, race, and region to match national distributions.

3% of respondents who identified prescription drug misuse alone or in combination with something else, respondents who did not correctly identify prescription drug misuse chose things like depression, psychological/emotional problems, and nothing.

4Professional help includes medicine, seeing a physician, counseling, psychiatric care, or drug rehabilitation. Self-help includes recognizing the problem, and talking to friends and family.