

## PW01-204 - IS STIGMA AFFECTED BY TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS?

H. Nearney<sup>1</sup>, J. Beezhold<sup>2</sup>, C. Nordt<sup>3</sup>, A. Howe<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Trust Alcohol and Drug Service, <sup>2</sup>Adult Acute Services, Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Norwich, UK, <sup>3</sup>Psychiatric University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland, <sup>4</sup>University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

**Introduction:** The Social Distance Scale (SDS) has been widely used as a proxy to explore stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness.

**Objectives:** To administer a vignette-based questionnaire incorporating the SDS to first year healthcare undergraduates.

**Aims:** To compare the attitudes of participants towards active and resolved cases of mental illness.

**Methods:** 567 students were sent an electronic questionnaire containing one vignette selected at random from a possibility of six (describing either active or medically resolved depression, schizophrenia or asthma). Participants then completed the SDS as used by Nordt (2006), to indicate what level of social closeness they would accept with such a person described in the vignette.

**Results:** 180 responses were received (31.7% response rate). Good levels of reliability for the Social Distance Scale were demonstrated (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. A linear regression model was applied which explained 18% of the variance. Respondents showed significantly more social distance towards the vignettes describing active cases of depression, schizophrenia and asthma compared to the vignettes describing medically resolved cases (+0.21;  $p=0.045$ ). Social distance towards the schizophrenia vignette was significantly higher (+0.28;  $P=0.031$ ) compared to the depression vignette, and social distance towards the asthma vignette was significant lower (-0.413;  $p=0.001$ ) compared to the depression vignette

**Conclusions:** Students were more socially distant towards the active cases of mental and physical illness compared to the resolved cases. A hierarchy of social distance existed, with most distance shown towards schizophrenia, followed by depression, with asthma receiving the least social distance.