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PERCEPTION OF PSYCHIATRY AND MENTAL DISEASE AMONG LEBANESE NON PSYCHIATRIC DOCTORS

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Objective : Evaluate the attitudes of non psychiatrist doctors and residents working in Hôtel-Dieu de France hospital towards mental illness and medical students of Saint Joseph University.

Method: A 25-question-questionnaire about the perception of severe mental illness, of psychiatric treatments, of psychiatrists, and of psychiatry as a future career, which was distributed to Saint Joseph University medical students over the 7 years via the delegates of each class, to the doctors via their secretaries in their clinics, and personally to the residents between the period of November 27 and December 28, 2007.

Results: We have found negative attitudes towards mental illness in the studied population but positive attitudes towards psychiatric treatments, psychiatry, and psychiatrists with higher scores among doctors than students towards mental illness ($p = 0.0073$) and towards psychiatric treatments ($p = 0.0016$) but no significant difference between different groups in the scores of perception of psychiatry ($p = 0.78$) and psychiatrists ($p = 0.42$). No difference was found between males and females for none of the scores.

Conclusion: This study is the first of its kind to demonstrate that medical students' attitudes are negative towards mental illness but positive towards psychiatric treatments, psychiatry, and psychiatrists during their first years of medical studies and stay the same after receiving a theoretical psychiatry course and after a clinical training in a psychiatric hospital and even when they become residents and that these attitudes become more positive when they become doctors.