Reviewer's report

Title: Stigma towards schizophrenia: Do all psychiatrists behave the same? Latent profile analysis of a Brazilian national sample

Version: 1 Date: 25 December 2012

Reviewer: Ryan Klein

Reviewer's report:

1. Abstract/Introduction - There is some ambiguity about the term “social distance” used early on in the abstract and introduction. “Social distance” and “stigma” could be defined at the beginning with commonly used research/academic definitions to orient the reader. The statement that “stigma is resilient” could also be more clearly stated for readers less familiar with this area of research. The main question is well stated at the end of the introduction, but could be more focused, perhaps by stating – ‘Our study aimed to analyze in detail psychiatrists’ stigma towards schizophrenia by identifying possible profiles of stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs in a cohort of Brazilian psychiatrists in 2009.’

2. In the methods section (paragraph 2), a bit more detail would be helpful to understand the backgrounds and recruitment methods used by the “fifty lay interviewers trained by the study’s investigators”. This might be useful to identify possible contributors to selection bias.

3. In the methods section (paragraph 3), it is interesting to note the lack of participation of study participants at various stages of the interview process. In the discussion, the authors may wish to explain why there was some attrition of these participants prior to and during the interviews, and if relevant, how this might relate to overall views of stigma among psychiatrists within their Brazilian cohort. As well, the authors may wish to clarify why they surveyed members of other professions when their original aim was to only profile psychiatrists.

4. Discussion - Considering the impact of writing a paper that could be generalizable to all psychiatrists, it seems like a safe approach to emphasize caution in interpreting these results. It also seems appropriate to emphasize the limitations in available data, and for the authors to refer to similar studies outside of Brazil for a balanced profile of stigma amongst psychiatrists. What might be a less expanded upon aspect of their work is the overall impact of publishing such a paper. On the one hand, the work promotes an attitude of sharing and transparency that helps individuals in the profession grow and develop a better understanding of themselves – which is seemingly a key aspect of psychiatry. This in turn contributes to better anti-stigma public health initiatives and more self-aware practitioners. On the other hand, the downside of a paper like this is that the results and/or conclusions might lead to “profiling” and/or “stereotyping” of psychiatrists, which could create or perpetuate stigma against psychiatrists and mental health workers. It seems though that the authors were able to counter
this stance by (1) emphasizing the evolving and heterogeneous nature of these profiles instead of implying that they are static, and (2) by focusing on the constructive use of this information to fuel further research and reduce overall stigma.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.