

Stigma In Medical School Education: A Comparative Analysis Of ASPD, MDD, AND GAD

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BACKGROUND

- In the wider community, Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) faces more stigma than other psychiatric conditions, including Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- ASPD stigma extends to healthcare, where providers hold negative views toward patients with the condition
- Determining if medical education reinforces these attitudes can guide early intervention aimed at reducing stigma to enhance care
- This study aims to assess whether educational materials mirror and reinforce broader public stigma patterns

METHODS

- Ten medical educational resources were analyzed for language describing ASPD, MDD, and GAD
- Materials were from third-party resources used by medical students nationwide and the Warren Alpert Medical School
- Linguistic analysis focused on *labels* and *status loss*, assessed through clinical pessimism (treatment difficulty and omission)
- Fisher's Exact Test compared ASPD, GAD, and MDD

RESULTS

For ASPD:

- 90% of materials used labels like "bad" or "corrupt" while none did for MDD or GAD ($p < 0.0001$)
- 60% of materials emphasized treatment difficulty using phrases like "impossible to treat," compared to 10% for MDD and none for GAD ($p < 0.001$)
- 50% of materials omitted treatment options compared to 20% for GAD and 10% for MDD ($p = 0.0158$)

Figure 1. Labels Used in education materials discussing ASPD with size reflecting frequency.

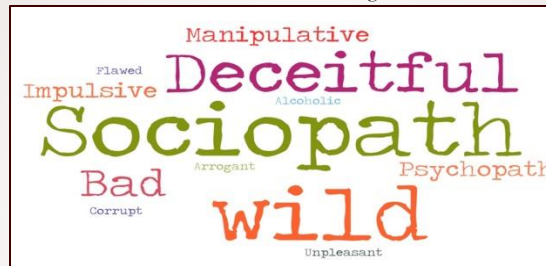
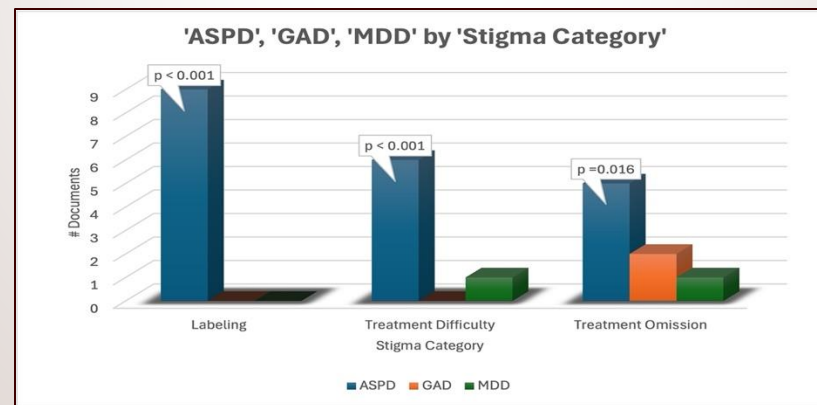


Figure 2. Prevalence of Stigmatizing Language in Resources for ASPD, GAD, and MDD



DISCUSSION

- The findings reveal significant disparities in medical educational content—ASPD is depicted with more stigma than MDD and GAD through labels and status loss
- There is an urgent need to re-evaluate how psychiatric conditions, including ASPD, are taught in medical school, offering an opportunity to recognize and reduce stigma and foster more empathetic care for patients who already face treatment barriers
- More research is needed to guide early intervention

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