Stigma of mental illness in India linked to poverty

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The stigma surrounding people with severe mental illness in India leads to increased poverty among them, especially women, according to new research led by Jean-Francois Trani, PhD, assistant professor at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

Trani and fellow researchers, including Jill Kuhlberg, doctoral student and research associate at the Brown School, studied more than 1,000 patients and controls in the mental health department of a hospital in New Delhi from 2011-12, conducting interviews during hospital visits and at homes.

The results, "Mental Illness, Poverty and Stigma in India: A Case–Control Study," are published in the journal The *BMJ Open*.

"Mental health professionals must incorporate an understanding of multidimensional poverty stressors as well as address family and community dynamics," Trani wrote in the paper. "Our findings go beyond medical and public health and link mental health to international development."

Trani and his team found that public stigma and poverty linked to mental illness were "pervasive and intertwined." Assumptions by many that mentally ill people are violent and unable to work contribute to their unemployment.

Stigma associated with mental illness limits women from fulfilling

family and social roles, increasing discrimination against them, the study found.

More information: "Mental illness, poverty and stigma in India: a case–control study." *BMJ Open* 2015;5:2 e006355 DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006355

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