**BACKGROUND**

- The impact of stigma within mental health care has become much more widely understood.
- Research has shown that misperceptions and stigma of adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are higher, compared to children.
- The impact of stigma on treatment seeking and maintenance among adult patients with ADHD is still highly under-investigated.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To identify perceptions and experiences of stigma among adults with ADHD actively engaged in treatment.
- To provide an anonymous space for adults with ADHD to express feelings and concerns regarding perceived and experienced stigma during the process of ADHD diagnosis, medication acquisition, and treatment.

**METHODS**

**Study Design and Dissemination:**
- 16-item Qualtrics survey administered via phone or email

**Study Period:**
- November 2022 - December 2022

**Study Population:**
- Patients age 18 – 79 years old, with a diagnosis of ADHD and actively receiving care from a psychiatric provider at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in St. Louis, Missouri

**Sample Survey Questions:**
1. When seeking initial diagnosis and/or treatment for ADHD, how did you feel about doing so?
2. Approximately how long after your initial diagnosis of ADHD did you begin prescription stimulant medication(s)?
3. How often are you required to visit or check-in with your prescriber to continue receiving your stimulant prescription(s)?
4. What barriers have you experienced related to obtaining your prescription stimulant medication for ADHD?
5. Have you felt hesitant to seek prescription stimulant treatment due to stigma (from pharmacy or prescriber)?
6. Have you ever felt a need to change prescribers in order to feel less affected by the stigma surrounding your prescription stimulant medication(s)?
7. What feelings or comments would you like to express regarding what you think would be helpful for clinicians and/or pharmacies to know when working with patients with prescription stimulant treatment(s) in order for those patients to not feel stigmatized when receiving care?

**RESULTS**

**Most Common Reported Barriers to Obtaining Prescription Stimulant ADHD Medications**

- **Medication Not in Stock at the Pharmacy**: 35%
- **Prescription "Too Soon" to Refill (Provider or Pharmacy Policy)**: 30%
- **Prescription Requires Prior Authorization**: 25%
- **Pharmacy**: 15%
- **Other Pharmacy**: 10%
- **Prescriber**: 5%
- **Other Clinic/Medical Staff (Nurse, Assistant, etc.)**: 0%

**Specific Stigmatizing Perceptions/Experiences Creating Hesitancy to Seek Future Treatment**

- Anxiety/Worries Surrounding Required or Possibility of Required Urine Drug Screening: 35%
- Fear of Being Perceived as "Doctor Shopping": 20%
- Being Labeled as Having a Substance Use Disorder: 15%
- Perceptions On the Validity of Adult ADHD Diagnosis: 10%

**DISCUSSION**

- The highest rate of reported stigma was from pharmacist and pharmacy staff when acquiring prescription stimulant treatment.
- Commonly reported barriers to obtaining a prescription stimulant were drug availability, insurance issues, controlled substance refill policies, and pricing/insurance coverage.
- Compassion and understanding from their prescriber were mentioned by many participants as a necessary component of their treatment.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Patients with an adult ADHD diagnosis experience stigma from multiple treatment points within the healthcare system.
- Stigma surrounding the process of ADHD diagnosis, medication acquisition, and treatment continues to be a major barrier toward seeking and maintaining stimulant treatment.
- Healthcare providers are encouraged to further explore the lived-experience of adults with ADHD to better understand and ultimately reduce stigmatizing behaviors.

Scan the following QR code to review study participant feedback and comments on reducing stigma within adult ADHD care:

[QR Code Image]