

Stigma is a common reason many individuals do not seek out and adhere to treatment for mental health concerns. Untreated mental illness can negatively impact an individual's function and mood. Education is a common method of intervention to reduce stigma. Many interventions are targeted to reduce stigma towards individuals with mental illness, but less so target stigma towards treatment of mental illness. The present study expands upon previous research of the utility of education in destigmatizing antidepressants. Participants were N = 257 undergraduate Introduction to Neuroscience students who completed a retrospective pre-post questionnaire adapted from the Drug Attitude Inventory (DAI), Beliefs about Medicines Questionnaire (BMQ) and common misconceptions surrounding antidepressants. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess knowledge and level of stigma towards antidepressants. A paired samples t-test was conducted for each item measuring stigma towards antidepressants. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that from the beginning to the end of the course, students were significantly less likely to believe that antidepressants are addictive substances ($p < 0.05$), unnatural for the body and mind ($p < 0.05$), more bad than good ($p < 0.05$), and prescribed too frequently ($p < 0.05$). An exploratory analysis using a mixed model ANOVA was performed for differences between students interested in pursuing a healthcare career relative to students uninterested in healthcare. From beginning to end of neuroscience curriculum students showed significant reduction of stigma, suggesting that neuroscience curriculum should be considered for future education-based interventions to minimize stigma towards medicative treatments of mental illness.

Keywords: Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors, Stigma, Neuroscience, Undergraduate Students, Antidepressant Medications