

## Perceived and anticipated discrimination in people with mental illness— An interview study

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*Background.* Studies on perceived discrimination of people with mental illness are largely lacking. The purpose of the study was to investigate perceived discrimination in a sample of users in contact with mental health services in Sweden. *Methods.* Interviews were conducted with 156 users, asking for perceived and anticipated discrimination during the last 2 years. Background characteristics were also collected. *Results.* Perceived discrimination was common. Highest frequencies were reported regarding family (54%), avoidance by people who knew about the mental illness (53%) and in making or keeping friends (50%). A majority of those anticipating discrimination regarding job or education seeking, or starting a close relationship did not report having been discriminated in these areas. Previous hospitalizations were associated with discrimination, and age with anticipated discrimination. *Conclusions.* Public stigma and self-stigma have been reported to have a number of negative consequences for people with mental illness. Discrimination is part of this complex situation and this study showed that this largely affects a number of individual life areas posing an obstacle for social integration. Anticipated discrimination or self-stigma was also prevalent and it is pointed out that this to a great extent is an obstacle on its own without being promoted by actual experiences of discrimination.