NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN ENGLAND 2008-2013

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Importance of media coverage and representation

• Major source of information especially for those without personal experience or familiarity
• Reflect and shape attitudes
• Structural/organisational form of discrimination
• Impact on people with lived experience and their supporters
• Selection for newsworthiness automatically creates bias
Media representation (1)

Whitley and Berry Can J Psychiatry 2013

**Methods:** retrospective analysis of Canadian newspaper coverage 2005 to 2010. Research assistants used a standardized guide to code 11,263 newspaper articles that mention the terms mental health, mental illness, schizophrenia, or schizophrenic.

**Results:**
- 40% Danger, violence, and criminality
- 19% Treatment for a mental illness
- 18% Recovery or rehabilitation.
- 83% lacked a quotation from someone with a mental illness.

No significant changes over time from 2005 to 2010 in any domain measured.

**Conclusion:** There is scope for more balanced, accurate, and informative coverage of mental health issues in Canada.
Media Representation (2)

Goulden R et al 2010

Methods
Content analysis on a sample of articles ($n=1361$) about mental illness in a range of UK newspapers in 1992, 2000, and 2008.

Results
• Significant proportional ↓ in negative articles about mental illness between 1992 and 2008
• Significant ↑ in articles explaining psychiatric disorders.
• Coverage improved for depression but remained largely negative for schizophrenia.

Conclusions
Newspaper coverage of mental illness became less stigmatising overall in the 1990s and 2000s, but this was not true for all diagnoses.
Newspaper coverage of mental illness in England 2008–2011

Amalia Thomicroft, Robert Goulden, Guy Shefer, Danielle Rhydderch, Diana Rose, Paul Williams, Graham Thomicroft and Claire Henderson

Background
Better newspaper coverage of mental health-related issues is a target for the Time to Change (TTC) anti-stigma programme in England, whose population impact may be influenced by how far concurrent media coverage perpetuates stigma and discrimination.

Aims
To compare English newspaper coverage of mental health-related topics each year of the TTC social marketing campaign (2009–2011) with baseline coverage in 2008.

Method
Content analysis was performed on articles in 27 local and national newspapers on two randomly chosen days each month.

Results
There was a significant increase in the proportion of anti-stigmatising articles between 2008 and 2011. There was no concomitant proportional decrease in stigmatising articles, and the contribution of mixed or neutral elements decreased.

Conclusions
These findings provide promising results on improvements in press reporting of mental illness during the TTC programme in 2009–2011, and a basis for guidance to newspaper journalists and editors on reporting mental illness.

Declaration of interest
G.T. has received grants for stigma-related research in the past 5 years from Lundbeck UK and from the National Institute for Health Research, and has acted as a consultant to the UK Office of the Chief Scientist.
EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION

1,200 KILLED BY MENTAL PATIENTS

Shock 10-year toll exposes care crisis
So great to see so many of you showing the everyday face of mentalhealth mentalpatient

@MindCharity My 2 year old doesn’t seem to mind my #mentalpatient costume. #TimetoTalk #whatstigma
## Our sample frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>Local</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily/Sunday Telegraph</td>
<td>Birmingham Evening mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/Sunday Mail</td>
<td>Eastern Daily Press (Norwich)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/Sunday Star</td>
<td>Evening Chronicle (Newcastle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/Sunday Express</td>
<td>The Evening Standard (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily/Sunday Mirror</td>
<td>Hull Daily Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times/Sunday Times</td>
<td>Leicester Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun/Sun on Sunday</td>
<td>Liverpool Echo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian/Observer</td>
<td>Manchester Evening News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent/Independent on Sunday</td>
<td>The Sentinel (Stoke)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Changes in proportions of overall coding across the 5 years of study

Overall coding of articles

- **2013**: 38% Stigmatising, 40% Anti-Stigmatising, 6% Mixed, 15% Neutral
- **2011**: 45% Stigmatising, 41% Anti-Stigmatising, 5% Mixed, 8% Neutral
- **2010**: 50% Stigmatising, 34% Anti-Stigmatising, 5% Mixed, 11% Neutral
- **2009**: 43% Stigmatising, 36% Anti-Stigmatising, 6% Mixed, 15% Neutral
- **2008**: 46% Stigmatising, 31% Anti-Stigmatising, 7% Mixed, 16% Neutral
Changes over time in stigmatising elements of coverage

Proportion of articles containing the specified element

- Danger to others
- Hopeless victim
- Personal responsibility
- Strange behaviour
- Problem for others
- Pejorative language

2013
Changes over time in anti-stigmatising elements of coverage

- Sceptical of seriousness
- Sympathetic portrayal
- Causes of mental illness
- Recovery and treatment
- Mental Health promotion
- Injustice
- Prevalence
- Stigma

(Bar chart showing percentage changes from 2008 to 2013)
Overall coding of articles containing the specified diagnosis (n) in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Stigmatizing</th>
<th>Anti-stigmatizing</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia (53)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified (272)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bipolar disorder (55)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression (313)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCD (24)</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety disorders (37)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD (36)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD (23)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorders (37)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of changes 2008-13

• 2013 had the highest number of articles covering issues related to mental health since the study began (913) compared with 2011 (698) and 2010 (627) 2009 (794) and in 2008 (882).

• The proportion of articles featuring the stigmatising elements ‘danger to others’ and ‘personal responsibility’ decreased significantly across the 5 years.

• Significant proportional increases were found for the stigmatising element ‘strange behaviour’ from 9% in 2008 to 13% in 2013.

• Significant proportional changes for anti-stigmatising elements
  ‘causes of mental illness’ 10% in 2008 to 20% in 2013.
  ‘recovery and treatment of mental illness’ 6% in 2008 to 12% in 2013.
  ‘sympathetic portrayal of people with mental illness’ from 17% to 8%.

• Overall there was a significant increase across the five years in the proportion of anti-stigmatising articles, from 31% to 40%.

• There was also an overall change in stigmatising articles in this time period (46% to 38%). Future comparisons are need to determine if this is a consistent trend or if 2013 this was a unique year. It would also be useful to analyse the interim year of 2012.