

Social barriers in nutrition and mental health

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Objectives: The purpose of this thesis was to gain an understanding of the social conditions that preserve stigma and health inequalities in nutrition and mental health, and to obtain information on how these conditions may influence the efficacy of nutrition programs, resources, or services for mental health prevention and treatment. Mental health is a critical facet of overall health and well-being, and nutrition has increasingly been recognized as an essential aspect in the prevention and treatment of mental illness. However, both mental health and nutrition are affected by social challenges such as marginalization, stigmatization, discrimination, and health inequalities. Though the issues are recognized to an extent, social barriers in mental health and nutrition have not been researched in an extensive manner. **Methods:** This qualitative study involved one-on-one semi-structured interviews with nutrition and mental health professionals (n=6) participating in research or policy work. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed for common themes. **Results:** Analysis resulted in the identification of the following themes and recommendations for action: there are specific social beliefs that interfere with health care through stigma and discrimination at individual, provider, and structural levels; certain populations are most vulnerable to these effects, whereas others benefit; addressing social barriers must include changes to primary care, collaboration at all levels, implementing social support, and political action. **Implications & Conclusions:** Implications on guidelines for integrating nutrition care into mental health are discussed. This information may be used to inform future research and improve nutrition interventions for mental health prevention and treatment.