

## What is stigma?

Stigma is negative beliefs and attitudes about others based on defining characteristics (e.g., health conditions)

## People with chronic pain also experience stigma if they have:

- Membership to groups, such as women, children, racial/ethnic minoritized groups.
- Other stigmatized conditions, such as depression, anxiety, substance use disorder.

## Perpetrators of stigma are:



- General public
- Healthcare professionals
- Friends, family, colleagues, and peers



- Popular culture



- People living with pain\*

*\*Some people self-stigmatize and believe what others say*

## Learn more about pain stigma:

- HHS Pain Stigma Factsheet: [https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pmtf-fact-sheet-stigma\\_508-2019-08-13.pdf](https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pmtf-fact-sheet-stigma_508-2019-08-13.pdf)
- NIH HEAL Stigma Research: <https://www.heal.nih.gov/research/cross-cutting-research/stigma-pain-management-opioid-disorder>
- NIMH Stigma and Discrimination Research Toolkit: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/about/organization/dar/stigma-and-discrimination-research-toolkit>

## People with chronic pain experience stigma when:



*Cause of pain is not well understood*



*Pain does not diminish over time*

## What stigmas do people living with chronic pain face?

- Pain is disbelieved or devalued
- They are blamed for their pain or labeled as drug-seeking
- They question the legitimacy of their pain (self-stigma\*)

## What are the effects of pain stigma?

- Observers are less inclined to help people
- Dissuades people from accessing healthcare
- Decreased quality of life

## How can stigma be addressed?

- Recognizing stigmatizing behaviors and language
- Provider education on biological, psychological, and social aspects of pain

## References:

- Goldberg (2017), *BMJ*
- De Ruddere & Craig (2016), *PAIN*
- Wakefield et al. (2018), *PAIN Reports*