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Identifying Stigma Cues in Network Television Content: Implications for Stigma Reduction Strategies

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Objectives

- Identify the program types more likely to contain information about these stigmatizing health conditions
- Explore differences in stigmatizing information present in each program type

Method

The television sample of 672 total hours of primetime television content from four major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX) was coded for mentions of two stigmatizing illnesses: HIV/AIDS and mental illness.



Mentions of Stigmatized Issues by Program Type

Program Type	Mental Illness		HIV/AIDS	
	Total Time (in Mins)	# of Instances	Total Time (in Mins)	# of Instances
National News	11.55	8	2.32	3
Local News	89.77	144	9.97	11
Entertainment News	3.62	1	0	0
Reality TV	18.45	33	0	0
Drama	48.8	52	0	0
Commercials	75.3	166	4.33	9
Talk Shows	7.17	11	8.97	3
Infomercials	1	1	0	0
Total	255.66	416	25.59	26

Results

- Discussions of mental illness were ten times more prevalent than HIV/AIDS, and commonly associated with the advertisement of a drug
- HIV/AIDS mentions were limited to news, commercials, and talk shows
- Many mental health portrayals included prescription drug commercials for depression, rather than portrayals of individuals



Mental Illness: Abilify Commercial



HIV/AIDS: "Get Tested"

Implications

- Mental health has the potential to be more stigmatized because of its frequent presence
- Overall lack of HIV/AIDS portrayals, focused on specific stories had less information
- More research needed for media literacy initiatives (i.e., identifying particularly problematic exposure points) and stigma reduction messaging (i.e., identifying specific cues that need to be corrected or dispelled through campaign or treatment efficacy messages)

Next phase: Coding stigma cues

Category	Definition	Variables
Character Attributes	Demographic features of patients portrayed	Race/ethnicity, sex, age, social class, body type
Character Relationships	Characters' stated or seen relationships with others	Friendships, romantic, familial, work, and ambiguous relationships
Mental state	Character's thoughts, feelings, reactions, and emotions	Uncertainty of others, uncertainty of self, self-consciousness, shame, warmth, lack of warm, sadness, fear, anger, competence, incompetence, fatigue, acceptance/denial/awareness of health condition
Precursors	Factors or events prior to the stigmatized issue	Biological factors, environmental factors, confounding factors, triggers, prevention
Social consequences	Impact of character's actions on others or impact of others' actions on character	Social distancing, verbal or physical threat/harm to others, physical and emotional social support
Stigmatizing actions	Actions toward character that indicate stigma	Labels, social exclusion, avoidance language, physical peril, lifestyle/value peril, anti-peril, disgust, lack of fairness/balance, compassion
Treatment	Discussion of health care for the stigmatized condition	Medicine, therapy, hospitalization/rehab, doctor/patient interaction, efficacy of treatment, lack of efficacy of treatment (self/others)