

“The Stories We Tell: Healthcare Professionals”

Episode Overview

In this episode, I examine how healthcare professionals shape the stories we tell about substance use and overdose. While many providers recognize substance use disorder as a medical condition, stigma remains deeply embedded in healthcare interactions. I explore how these perceptions influence patient experiences, decisions to seek care, and what can be done to improve healthcare responses.



- There is a major gap between need and treatment. Nearly 15% of people needed substance use treatment in 2020, but only about 1.4% received it.
- Stigma is widely reported in healthcare settings. Studies show that up to 78% of people who inject drugs have experienced stigma, including being dismissed or denied care.
- Provider attitudes matter. Research finds that lower stigma among healthcare professionals is associated with better care practices.

TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Stigma within healthcare settings continues to limit access to effective substance use treatment.
- ✓ Negative patient experience can lead to delayed care, nondisclosure, or leaving treatment early.
- ✓ Improving training, empathy, and communication can meaningfully reduce stigma and improve care.

References & Future Reading

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