

Highlights from the Interactive Global Recovery Dialogue

Moderated by Michael Botticelli
Global Recovery Network (GRN) Chair
April 11, 2024

“Stigma – An Inside Job?!”

Welcome by Ashwin Thind: The Interactive Global Recovery Dialogue Series is a five-part soft launch event leading up to the official launch of the Global Recovery Network in June of 2024 at the "Art of Healing" Global Conference in Greece.

Presentation by Warren Cornelius: Warren is a recovery peer, ally, and community activist from South Africa. He oversees prevention and recovery programming with ITTC South Africa and is the Deputy Country Coordinator for ICUDDR South Africa.

Warren highlighted the impact of stigma on help-seeking behaviours for people living with substance use disorders (SUD) around the world. Stigma is the negative judgment society places on people due to certain traits or behaviours, such as SUD, which are seen as undesirable. It involves labelling these traits, linking them to negative stereotypes, and treating these individuals as inferior, resulting in discrimination. The three forms of stigma are enacted or experienced stigma, anticipated or perceived stigma and internalised self-stigma.

Key points from the presentation:

- In many parts of the world, stigma has a direct impact on obtaining funding for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and recovery-oriented efforts.
- Recovery-centric policies are crucial in shaping public attitudes and subsequently reducing stigma, directly improving services.
- Collaborating with multi-level stakeholders between allies, such as the police, medical workers, community centres, and peers in recovery, is important to promote a better understanding of addiction and recovery. It also shares the message of HOPE and the MIRACLE of recovery!
- Stigma can be short-lived and situational, but it can be internalised, which can have far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for the person and community.

Participants were invited to reflect on these questions:

1. What does stigma look like in my setting?
2. Am I reducing OR contributing to stigma?
3. Have I experienced stigma?



The discussion was facilitated by [Michael Botticelli, GRN Chair](#), following the presentation.

Some key points highlighted during the lively interactive dialogue:

Learning and Knowledge Reduces Stigma and Misinformation

- ✓ Increasingly, law enforcement agencies recognise the need to upscale treatment efforts and reduce arrests and subsequent incarceration because substance use disorders can be managed well with evidence-based treatments.
- ✓ In many parts of the world where resources are limited, allies in faith-based organisations are the only point of contact for people struggling with substance use disorders. Training for allies is the key to providing effective support to people with substance use disorders.
- ✓ Stigma and discrimination are disrupted through understanding and support.
- ✓ Media is a pathway towards educating people and professionals.

Stigma is present on all levels of society

- ✓ There is an informational disconnect among the professional community, including medical professionals, who do not fully understand recovery.
- ✓ People in recovery working in the SUD workforce experience anxiety about disclosing lived experiences among professionals for fear of being seen as lesser.
- ✓ Dr Robert DuPont, renowned addiction expert and the first Drug Czar, humbly recounted his experience of how the person in recovery is a different person from the person who was struggling with addiction, which he attributed to spiritual growth. He urged society to listen, "Addiction is a teacher; it teaches everybody - doctors and families".
- ✓ Policymakers need to embrace humility and be inclusive of recovery voices.
- ✓ Humility will bridge the gap and expand the door to wisdom.



Our Words and Voices Matter

- ✓ The language we use when speaking about substance use disorders matters. There is some "insider language" used among people who use drugs that can be demeaning when used by others. People often cannot see the impact their words may have on people with SUD or people in recovery.
- ✓ Stigma is overcome through the courage to tell our story and the courage of others to listen.
- ✓ The voice of Recovery peers and allies are essential in combating stigma. RECOVER LOUDLY, as your voice can inspire and help!!

The old African proverb runs true, "Until the lion learns to write, his story will only be told by the hunter."

**NEXT GLOBAL RECOVERY DIALOGUE:
"Benefits and Challenges Behind Recovery Networking"
Presenter: Boro Goic
Chairman, Recovered Users Network**

Join us on May 9, 2024, 8 AM Washington DC time.