

## PW01-205 - DO HEALTHCARE STUDENTS HAVE MORE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESS COMPARED TO LAW AND ENGLISH STUDENTS?

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**Introduction:** The Social Distance Scale (SDS) is an established tool in the measurement of discriminatory attitudes towards those with mental illness.

**Objectives:** To send an electronic questionnaire incorporating the SDS to both healthcare and non-healthcare undergraduates.

**Aims:** To compare attitudes using the SDS of both student groups towards vignettes describing active and medically resolved cases of mental illness.

**Methods:** 567 first year healthcare and 501 non-healthcare (law and english) university students were sent a questionnaire randomly containing one of six possible vignettes (describing either active or medically resolved depression, schizophrenia or asthma). The SDS as used by Nordt (2006), was then completed, indicating what level of social closeness would be accepted with the person described.

**Results:** 180 responses were received for the healthcare group (31.7% response rate) and 125 for the non-healthcare group (25% response rate). Very good reliability of the Social Distance Scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.91$ ) was observed in the sample. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. A linear regression model was applied which explained 20% of the variance. A significant difference was observed in attitudes between healthcare and non-healthcare students towards both the active and resolved schizophrenia, with the Non-healthcare group expressing higher social distance towards these vignettes (+0.31;  $P=0.043$ ) compared to the healthcare group. The two groups did not differ significantly in social distance towards the depression and asthma vignettes.

**Conclusions:** The non-healthcare students were significantly more socially distant towards both active and resolved schizophrenia vignettes. The findings for the remaining vignettes were similar between the two groups.