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**THE ATTITUDE TO PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISORDERS AND BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHIATRY IN THE POPULATION OF POLISH UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Introduction:** Mental disorders can be manifested through varied symptomatology. Consequently, there are various clinical pictures which are observed in multiple dimensions and which affect the individual's social functioning. Social perception of people suffering from mental disorders keeps changing and, to a large extent, depends on cultural and social norms. Typically, the more often the behaviour or emotion is considered to be typical, i.e. manifested by almost all the sufferers, the more it reflects the social stereotype rather than the real reflection of disorders met in practice.

**Objective:** To recognise the opinions about people with mental disorders and to obtain information about the knowledge of the mentally ill.

**Material & Methods:** 1000 people from high schools and universities/colleges were interviewed. A survey designed by researchers was used.

**Results & Conclusions:** The analysed data suggests that there is a stereotypical perception and attitude towards mentally disordered people. All the analysed groups reported that mentally disordered people were more commonly referred to with negative terms. The interviewees classified mental disorders as the second worst disease. In terms of role function, the interviewees disapprove of people with mental disorders functioning as carers, doctors, policemen, lawyers. 45% of the interviewees claimed that people with mental disorders should use birth control not to get pregnant. 7% of the people interviewed considered mental disorders incurable. Only 44% of the interviewees do not worry about their mental health.