Mental Health 2.0 Submission

Stand Up to Stigma
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Social Media Links:
https://www.facebook.com/StandUpToStigma
https://twitter.com/standuptostigma
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Submission Category: Changing Attitudes

Stand Up to Stigma’s mission is to reduce stigma surrounding mental health by increasing awareness and discussion in the University of Waterloo (UW) community.

Stand Up to Stigma is a student-led initiative supported by Campus Wellness at UW. Our goal is to create a multi-modal campaign (including social media, videos, and posters) that aims to:

• Increase awareness about mental health issues, including depression and anxiety disorders, around UW;
• Reduce the stigma associated with mental illness at UW;
• Start a conversation amongst members of the UW community about mental health; and,
• Provide information about available on-campus mental health services and access to resources for students to seek help for themselves and others.

Launched in May 2012, Stand Up to Stigma promotes awareness through social media and on-campus events. One component of our campaign is on-campus display booths that increase awareness about mental health stigma. Along with discussing
mental health and stigma at these display booths, we ask students to take a photo holding a blackboard with a message about mental health and/or the associated stigma. These photos are uploaded onto our Facebook page, which provides an incentive for those who participate in our campaign to “like” our page. As students tag themselves and their friends in these photos, they appear on individuals’ profiles, promoting positive messages about mental health and in many cases, sharing messages of support. Those who see the photos can then link to our Facebook page. We use social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) to provide resources (i.e., information and support services), share articles related to mental health and stigma, provide positive and inspirational messages, and promote on-campus mental health initiatives. All information used in our campaign is from credible sources including the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s Mental Health First Aid course (in which one of our Co-Directors is certified), CMHA, CAMH, and the Jack Project.

We work closely with the UW Director of Campus Wellness to ensure that our messaging is consistent with the campus’ mental health strategy. In the summer of 2012, UW released its Mental Health and Wellness Review, which identified increasing access to services and decreasing stigma as priorities at UW. Our campaign goals (listed previously) address these priorities. Stand Up to Stigma has been featured in Imprint, the UW student newspaper; the UW Student Success Office’s “uWaterloo Life Blog”; and the UW Daily Bulletin. We have also reached out to other student groups (i.e., faculty student councils) on campus to promote awareness.

Lastly, we have engaged with other Canadian post-secondary institutions by presenting about our initiative at Unleash the Noise, Canada’s first student mental health innovation summit. Moving forward, we hope to develop a website for Stand Up to Stigma in order to design a layout that increases accessibility to information, as we find the Facebook layout makes it difficult for students to find the resources available on our page. We believe this campaign would be easily transferrable to other campuses due to its low cost and few resources required.