

What is
diagnostic
overshadowing?

Diagnostic overshadowing occurs when a clinician's judgement is unreasonably influenced by co-occurring diagnosis. This is particularly prevalent for groups with a learning disability or mental illness. It is influenced by bias, both conscious and unconscious.

Mirror Work

(Self-reflection)

Window Work

(looking into the organisation)

Affinity Bias

Favour people who look like us.
We tend to avoid people who different in any way or unfamiliar.

Attribution Bias

Tendency to excuse our behaviour as a response to circumstances.
When others behave the same way, we assume part of their character/personality .

Confirmation Bias

We agree with evidence that confirms or backs up our initial beliefs and overlook any evidence that challenges these beliefs.
Media stereotypes can influence this

Decision Making

Structural biases are upheld by power and decision-making structures, as well as who holds social power. These may unconsciously operate to exclude groups from opportunities.

Organisational Bias

Unspoken expectations people share. This may relate to dress code, planned activities make assumptions about beliefs, financial status etc.

Why does it happen

Primary

- Provider bias
- Assumption that difficult to diagnose physical symptoms in individuals with mental illness are psychosomatic

Secondary

- Health Literacy
- Individuals with a mental illness are unsure if their symptoms are real, may struggle to communicate them in a way the clinician can interpret

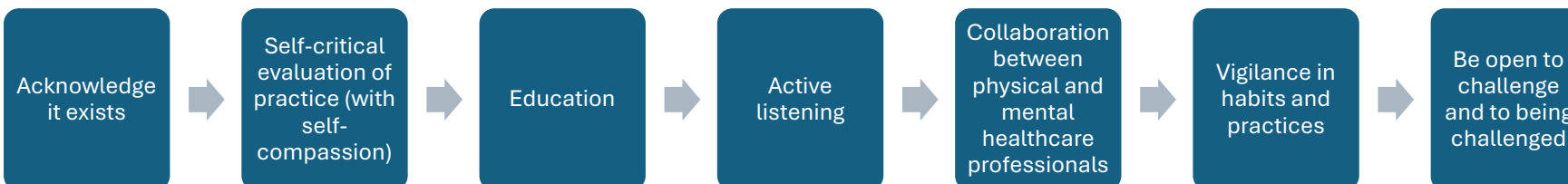
Tertiary

- Flagging of health records may predispose healthcare professionals to associate physical symptoms with psychological origin.
- Mental health and judicial system is too closely aligned

How does it impact care?

Premature closure bias
Worsening physical conditions
Inadequate treatment plans
Incomplete assessments and investigations
Decreased willingness to seek help
Fear of not being taken seriously.
Poor outcomes
Reduced life expectancy.
Poor quality of life
Fewer years in good health
Reduced life chances
Widening gap in social determinates of health
Greater demand on health and care services

How can we address it?



How can I recognise
diagnostic
overshadowing?



Be kind to yourself - We all have biases, acknowledging this is an important step. Paying attention to your thoughts may help to uncover them.

Questions to ask yourself

- What core beliefs do I hold?
- How might these limit or enable me at work?
- How do I react to people from different backgrounds?
- Do I hold stereotypes or assumptions?
- How might these limit or enable me at work?
- Do my words and actions reflect my intentions?
- Do I put myself in the shoes of the other person?

Questions to ask the MDT

- What assumptions do we hold as a team?
- How might these limit or enable us when reviewing cases?
- Do we all feel able to challenge each others' decisions? If not, how can this be encouraged?
- What gaps in knowledge and experience do we have in the team and how can we fill them?