

## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective: The main goal of this work was to assess the attitude of physiotherapy students towards working with patients suffering from mental illness and to also assess their attitude towards mentally ill patients in general. The secondary aim concerns their level of knowledge of mental illnesses and professional experience during their practice at a psychiatric hospital and how they can both influence a student's attitude.

Methods: To reach the final results a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: two standardized tests for measuring stigmatization (MAKS and MICA) and a set of my own questions for gaining further information.

Results: Eighty-nine physiotherapy students from different towns and faculties participated in the study. An average score MAKS scale in the surveyed group of physiotherapy students was 49 out of a possible 60, indicating a very good level of knowledge of mental illnesses. A statistically significant difference in the level of knowledge was not proved between students of bachelor and master studies. Furthermore, the attitude of physiotherapy students to the mentally ill patients was found to be very positive (the average score was 68.7 on the MICA scale, out of a possible 96). This test detected quite a big difference concerning the attitude towards patients between students of bachelor and master studies. Gaining professional experience during student practice at a psychiatric hospital did not prove to have a statistical significant impact on the attitude towards patients with mental health problems.

Conclusion: Physiotherapy has a very important place in a multidisciplinary team treatment of patients with mental disorders. It is important to have sufficient knowledge of mental health care, but also have specific personality traits and the professional maturity to successfully provide therapy to patients with mental health disorders. The foundation of an effective patient-therapist relationship in general, not only with those suffering from mental illnesses relies on the therapist's communication skills and ability to motivate the patient to cooperate. All students should have a chance to acquire these skills during their studies, for example in a training course focused on these specific skills.

### **Key words:**

Stigmatization attitudes, level of knowledge, mental illness, MAKS, MICA