Social (or external) stigma is when some component of society expresses prejudices toward people with a condition, such as COVID-19...or even just being a health-care worker. This could take the form of fear, blame and unfair treatment, and can have serious impact. [1]

Internal stigma is self-blame. People may self-stigmatize for presumptions that they did not follow preventive measures like physical distancing, masking or handwashing. However, individuals may be quarantined or contract COVID-19 in spite of these measures!

What can we do to address & prevent stigma? [2]

Share facts from trustworthy sources. Stigma can be driven by insufficient knowledge about COVID-19. Misconceptions and misinformation contribute to stigmatization.

Don't blame the victim. COVID-19 is a virus — not a moral issue.

Show support, kindness and empathy to individuals who have COVID-19, as well as those being tested and people in self-isolation.

Ensure staff are aware of **supports for employee and family well-being.**

Secure adequate health-care staffing with surge capacity and redundancy, so health-care workers who have to self-isolate don't feel guilty about not being able to fulfil patient care needs.

Be open to dialogue. **Understand and address people's fears calmly and with facts.**

References
1. Taylor, Steven, et al. "Fear and Avoidance of Healthcare Workers: An Important, under-Recognized Form of Stigmatization during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, vol. 75, 2020, p. 102289.
2. Social stigma associated with COVID-19. WHO, 2020.

Email posh.covid@ubc.ca questions, concerns, possible exposures, etc.
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