

# Mental health workers have more empathy

**Mental health workers have greater empathy than physicians or other professionals, according to an online survey.**

Hernando Santamaría-García at Favaloro University, Buenos Aires, and colleagues received 1,109 responses to a survey hosted on Intramed, a commercial Spanish-language healthcare information service.

Psychiatrists and psychologists from nine Latin American countries participated. The non-medical workers were all employed in professional roles.

Participants' empathy for pain was tested using cartoons of accidental, natural and intentional harm. Participants also responded to two moral dilemmas.

The authors found mental health workers had significantly higher empathetic concern than the other groups for intentional harm, but not for harm caused by accident or natural situations.

Mental health workers and physicians with more than a decade's experience showed less empathetic concern for intentional harm than less experienced clinicians, confirming earlier findings.

The authors suggest differences in training, exposure to suffering, or an aptitude for empathy in mental health workers could all explain the differences.

*Santamaría-García, H., Baez, S., García, A.M, Flichtentrei, D., Prats, M., Mastandueno, R., Sigman, M., Matallana, D., Cetkovich, M. & Ibáñez, M (2017) Empathy for others' suffering and its mediators in mental health professionals. Scientific Reports 7, Article number: 6391 doi:10.1038/s41598-017-06775-y*