

BACKGROUND

- Peer support worker is someone with lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both.¹
- Patients with psychiatric diagnoses being among some of the highest rates for medication nonadherence.²
- Huge contributing factor includes gap between patients and health care professionals.³
- Average cost savings of \$5,494 per person⁴

OBJECTIVE

- To educate on the importance of peer specialists in health care.
- Exam the lived experiences of interviewed peer specialists.
- Educating future healthcare sectors on the importance of further understanding patients' need for peer specialists.
- Make an influence of future patients' health resulting in a healthier life and an improved healthcare system.

References

1) Peer Support Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/brss_tac/peer-support-2017.pdf
 2) Treatment Nonadherence: An Epidemic Hidden in Plain Sight. Psychiatric Times. Retrieved from <https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/treatment-nonadherence-epidemic-hidden-plain-sight>
 3) Shalaby, R. A. H., & Agyapong, V. I. O. (2020). Peer Support in Mental Health: Literature Review. *JMIR mental health*, 7(6), e15572. <https://doi.org/10.2196/15572>
 4) Evidence for Peer Support. Mental Health America. Retrieved from <https://www.mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20for%20Peer%20Support%20May%202019.pdf>

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions	Answers
Describe your role as a peer support specialist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide lived experiences to motivate clients. • Advocate and be a voice for clients on a less clinical level. • “Goal is to lift the spirit and lift the soul of the clients.” • Some specialists are mental health based while some are substance use based.
How would you describe your medication experience through the years? (ex. From doctor's office to picking it up at the pharmacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of childhood diagnosis made their adult diagnosis and right treatment an “experience”. • Numerous failed medications made everyday life difficult to carry out. • Parents beliefs were significant barriers to care.
What have been the biggest barriers to finding the right medication, receiving routine prescriptions, and ensuring you receive them each month?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain diagnoses made medication adherence difficult. (fatigue and memory) • Side-effects of medication. (numb and loss of joy)
Tell me of a time you had to make other choices over getting your medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an adolescent, being untreated lead to self medicating. • Parents response (“you have no reason to be stressed”; not “believing” in mental health treatment) persuaded them to make their own choice.
Tell me of a time you felt judged or uncomfortable during the experience of getting your medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Switched psychiatrist due to disconnect. • Complications with medical doctor not wanting to listen about medication concerns. • Never any issues with pharmacy.
Tell me about a time you had some difficulty with obtaining a job. How was your mental health influenced by this experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management had a lack of understanding of diagnoses which resulted in uncomfortable situations. • Management had no sympathy for medically needed callouts. • Sobriety and brain fog led to lack of self esteem resulting in a revolving door of jobs.
Tell me how you previously dealt with stressful situations compared to today.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a child: dissociated from reality vs as an adult (previously): would “shut down”. • Today as an adult communicates when they feel stressed and takes a moment to recognize what they need. • Some would turn to street drugs but now identifies problems and fixes the issue immediately. • Alcohol and Xanax was a huge factor but now follows through with therapy.

CONCLUSION

- Peer specialists can instill hope, improve QOL, self-confidence, successful treatment, and reduce burden on healthcare system.⁵
- A great deal of literature supports the inclusion of peer support specialists in mental health care workforce to impact overall healthcare.