**BACKGROUND**

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

**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.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
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| Describe your role as a peer support specialist. | • 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) | • 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? | • 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. | • 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. | • 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? | • 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. | • 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.
- A great deal of literature supports the inclusion of peer support specialists in mental health care workforce to impact overall healthcare.

**References**

5. A great deal of literature supports the inclusion of peer support specialists in mental health care workforce to impact overall healthcare.