Online Peer Support for the Treatment of Mental Illness: Clinical Effectiveness and Guidelines
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Acknowledgments:

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About CADTH: CADTH is an independent, not-for-profit organization responsible for providing Canada’s health care decision-makers with objective evidence to help make informed decisions about the optimal use of drugs, medical devices, diagnostics, and procedures in our health care system.
Research Questions
1. What is the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness?
2. What are the evidence-based guidelines associated with the use of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness?

Key Findings
Two randomized controlled trials were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness.

Methods
A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, Ovid Medline, The Cochrane Library, University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. No methodological filters were applied to limit retrieval by publication type. The search was limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2012 to August 25, 2017.

Selection Criteria
One reviewer screened citations and selected studies based on the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Selection Criteria
| Population | Adults with mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], sexual harassment/abuse) |
| Interventions | Online peer support |
| Comparator | Q1: In-person peer support; Online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT); Group therapy; No treatment |
| | Q2: No comparator |
| Outcomes | Q1: Clinical effectiveness (e.g., reduction in symptoms, improvement in quality of life) |
| | Q2: Guidelines |
| Study Designs | Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, nonrandomized studies, and guidelines |
Results

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines.

Two randomized controlled trials were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness. No relevant health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, non-randomized studies, or evidence-based guidelines were identified.

Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

Health Technology Assessments
No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses
No literature identified.

Randomized Controlled Trials


Non-Randomized Studies
No literature identified.

Guidelines and Recommendations
No literature identified.
Appendix — Further Information

Previous CADTH Reports


Randomized Controlled Trials - Alternative Comparator


Non-Randomized Studies

Alternative Intervention


Alternative Comparator


Review Articles


Additional References