

CADTH Reference List

Peer Support for Youth Mental Health

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Key Messages

- Two systematic reviews, 1 randomized controlled trial, and 2 non-randomized studies were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of peer support interventions for the management of young people with mental health conditions. No relevant health technology assessments were identified.
- No evidence-based guidelines regarding peer support interventions for the management of young people with mental health conditions were identified.

Research Questions

1. What is the clinical effectiveness of peer support interventions for the management of young people (age 10 to 25) with mental health conditions?
2. What are the evidence-based guidelines regarding peer support interventions for the management of young people (age 10 to 25) with mental health conditions?

Methods

Literature Search Methods

A limited literature search was conducted by an information specialist on key resources including MEDLINE, PsycINFO, the Cochrane Library, the University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, the websites of Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused internet search. The search strategy comprised both controlled vocabulary, such as the National Library of Medicine's MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), and keywords. The main search concepts were peer support and youth with mental health disorders. Search filters were applied to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or network meta-analyses, any types of clinical trials or observational studies, and guidelines. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2010 and December 9, 2020. Internet links were provided, where available.

Selection Criteria

One reviewer screened literature search results (titles and abstracts) and selected publications according to the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1. Full texts of study publications were not reviewed. Open access full-text versions of evidence-based guidelines were reviewed when abstracts were unavailable.

Results

Two systematic reviews,^{1,2} 1 randomized controlled trial,³ and 2 non-randomized studies^{4,5} were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of peer support interventions for the

Table 1: Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description
Population	Young people (between 10 and 25 years of age) with mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicidality, eating disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorders)
Intervention	Structured peer support programs conducted virtually or in person
Comparator	Q1: No structured peer support program intervention; usual care; alternative treatments that do not include peer support (e.g., psychotherapy or pharmacotherapy); waitlist Q2: Not applicable
Outcomes	Q1: Clinical effectiveness (e.g., health status, symptom severity, quality of life, and treatment retention) Q2: Evidence-based guidelines
Study designs	Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines

management of young people with mental health conditions. No relevant health technology assessments were identified. No evidence-based guidelines regarding peer support interventions for the management of young people with mental health conditions.

References of potential interest that did not meet the inclusion criteria are provided in Appendix 1.

References

Health Technology Assessments

No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

1. Rose-Clarke K, Bentley A, Marston C, Prost A. Peer-facilitated community-based interventions for adolescent health in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *PLoS One*. 2019;14(1). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6343892/> [Medline](#)
2. Ali K, Farrer L, Gulliver A, Griffiths KM. Online Peer-to-Peer support for Young People With Mental Health Problems: A Systematic Review. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2015 Apr-Jun;2(2):e19. [Medline](#)

Randomized Controlled Trials

3. Vaclavik D, Buitron V, Rey Y, Marin CE, Silverman WK, Pettit JW. Parental acculturation level moderates outcome in peer-involved and parent-involved CBT for anxiety disorders in Latino youth. *J Lat Psychol*. 2017 Sep;5(4):261-274. [Medline](#)
Note: The study examined parental acculturation.

Non-Randomized Studies

4. Wilkerson JM, Schick VR, Romijnders KA, Bauldry J, Butame SA, Montrose C. Social Support, Depression, Self-Esteem, and Coping Among LGBTQ Adolescents Participating in Hatch Youth. *Health Promot Pract*. 2017 05;18(3):358-365. [Medline](#)
5. Mackesy-Amiti ME, Finnegan L, Ouellet LJ, et al. Peer-education intervention to reduce injection risk behaviors benefits high-risk young injection drug users: a latent transition analysis of the CIDUS 3/DUIT study. *Aids Behav*. 2013 Jul;17(6):2075-2083. [Medline](#)

Evidence-Based Guidelines

No literature identified.

Appendix 1: References of Potential Interest

Previous CADTH Reports

6. CADTH. Peer Support Programs for Youth at Risk for Suicide and Self-Harm: Clinical Evidence; 2020. <https://www.cadth.ca/peer-support-programs-youth-risk-suicide-and-self-harm-clinical-evidence> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
7. CADTH. Peer Support Interventions for Mental Health Conditions and Addictive Disorders: Clinical Effectiveness, Cost-Effectiveness, and Guidelines; 2020. <https://www.cadth.ca/peer-support-interventions-mental-health-conditions-and-addictive-disorders-clinical-effectiveness> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
8. CADTH. Peer Support Interventions for Substance Use Disorder: Clinical Effectiveness, Cost-Effectiveness, and Guidelines; 2020. <https://www.cadth.ca/peer-support-interventions-substance-use-disorder-clinical-effectiveness-cost-effectiveness-and> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

Population Age Group Not Specified

9. Pfeiffer PN, Heisler M, Piette JD, Rogers MA, Valenstein M. Efficacy of peer support interventions for depression: a meta-analysis. *Gen Hosp Psychiatry*. 2011 Jan-Feb;33(1):29-36. [Medline](#)
Note: Age group not specified.

Prevention of Mental Health Conditions

10. Georgie JM, Sean H, Deborah MC, Matthew H, Rona C. Peer-led interventions to prevent tobacco, alcohol and/or drug use among young people aged 11-21 years: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*. 2016 Mar;111(3):391-407. [Medline](#)
Note: This systematic review included interventions to prevent substance use disorder in all young people.

Randomized Controlled Trials

Alternate Population

11. Pfeiffer PN, King C, Ilgen M, et al. Development and pilot study of a suicide prevention intervention delivered by peer support specialists. *Psychol Serv*. 2019 Aug;16(3):360-371. [Medline](#)
12. Moir F, Henning M, Hased C, Moyes SA, Elley CR. A Peer-Support and Mindfulness Program to Improve the Mental Health of Medical Students. *Teach Learn Med*. 2016 Jul-Sep;28(3):293-302. [Medline](#)
13. Mastroleo NR, Magill M, Barnett NP, Borsari B. A pilot study of two supervision approaches for peer-led alcohol interventions with mandated college students. *J Stud Alcohol*. 2014 May;75(3):458-466. [Medline](#)
14. Simpson A, Flood C, Rowe J, et al. Results of a pilot randomised controlled trial to measure the clinical and cost effectiveness of peer support in increasing hope and quality of life in mental health patients discharged from hospital in the UK. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2014 Feb 05;14:30. [Medline](#)
15. Proudfoot J, Parker G, Manicavasagar V, et al. Effects of adjunctive peer support on perceptions of illness control and understanding in an online psychoeducation program for bipolar disorder: a randomised controlled trial. *J Affect Disord*. 2012 Dec 15;142(1-3):98-105. [Medline](#)
16. Sledge WH, Lawless M, Sells D, Wieland M, O'Connell MJ, Davidson L. Effectiveness of peer support in reducing readmissions of persons with multiple psychiatric hospitalizations. *Psychiatr Serv*. 2011 May;62(5):541-544. [Medline](#)

Alternate Intervention

17. Godley MD, Passetti LL, Hunter BD, Greene AR, White WL. A randomized trial of Volunteer Recovery Support for Adolescents (VRSA) following residential treatment discharge. *J Subst Abuse Treat*. 2019 03;98:15-25. [Medline](#)
18. Morris RR, Schueller SM, Picard RW. Efficacy of a Web-based, crowdsourced peer-to-peer cognitive reappraisal platform for depression: randomized controlled trial. *J Med Internet Res*. 2015 Mar 30;17(3):e72. [Medline](#)
Note: Intervention was a web-based reappraisal program.

Alternate Comparator

19. Mastroleo NR, Turrisi R, Carney JV, Ray AE, Larimer ME. Examination of posttraining supervision of peer counselors in a motivational enhancement intervention to reduce drinking in a sample of heavy-drinking college students. *J Subst Abuse Treat*. 2010 Oct;39(3):289-297. [Medline](#)

Prevention of Mental Health Conditions

20. Stice E, Rohde P, Shaw H, Gau JM. Clinician-led, peer-led, and internet-delivered dissonance-based eating disorder prevention programs: Effectiveness of these delivery modalities through 4-year follow-up. *J Consult Clin Psychol*. 2020 May;88(5):481-494. [Medline](#)
21. Eickman L, Betts J, Pollack L, Bozsik F, Beauchamp M, Lundgren J. Randomized controlled trial of REBEL: A peer education program to promote positive body image, healthy eating behavior, and empowerment in teens. *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment & Prevention*. 2018;26(2):127-142. [Medline](#)
22. Stice E, Rohde P, Durant S, Shaw H, Wade E. Effectiveness of peer-led dissonance-based eating disorder prevention groups: results from two randomized pilot trials. *Behav Res Ther*. 2013 May;51(4-5):197-206. [Medline](#)
23. Becker CB, McDaniel L, Bull S, Powell M, McIntyre K. Can we reduce eating disorder risk factors in female college athletes? A randomized exploratory investigation of two peer-led interventions. *Body Image*. 2012 Jan;9(1):31-42. [Medline](#)
Note: Two peer-led interventions were compared to each other.
24. Becker CB, Wilson C, Williams A, Kelly M, McDaniel L, Elmquist J. Peer-facilitated cognitive dissonance versus healthy weight eating disorders prevention: A randomized comparison. *Body Image*. 2010 Sep;7(4):280-288. [Medline](#)
25. Wyman PA, Brown CH, LoMurray M, et al. An outcome evaluation of the Sources of Strength suicide prevention program delivered by adolescent peer leaders in high schools. *Am J Public Health*. 2010 Sep;100(9):1653-1661. [Medline](#)

Non-Randomized Studies

Alternate Comparator

26. Simmons MB, Batchelor S, Dimopoulos-Bick T, Howe D. The Choice Project: Peer Workers Promoting Shared Decision Making at a Youth Mental Health Service. *Psychiatr Serv*. 2017 Aug 01;68(8):764-770. [Medline](#)
27. Smith DC, Davis JP, Ureche DJ, Dumas TM. Six Month Outcomes of a Peer-Enhanced Community Reinforcement Approach for Emerging Adults with Substance Misuse: A Preliminary Study. *J Subst Abuse Treat*. 2016 Feb;61:66-73. [Medline](#)

Prevention of Mental Health Conditions

28. Evans W, Andrade E, Pratt M, et al. Peer-to-Peer Social Media as an Effective Prevention Strategy: Quasi-Experimental Evaluation. *JMIR Mhealth Uhealth*. 2020 05 06;8(5):e16207. [Medline](#)
29. Ciao AC, Latner JD, Brown KE, Ebnetter DS, Becker CB. Effectiveness of a peer-delivered dissonance-based program in reducing eating disorder risk factors in high school girls. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015 Sep;48(6):779-784. [Medline](#)
Note: The outcome was prevention of eating disorder.

Guidelines – Unclear Methodology

30. Access Open Minds. Youth Peer Support: Accessible, engaging, and recovery-oriented Guidelines for the design and delivery of youth peer support within youth mental health services; 2018. https://accessopenminds.ca/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2018/08/ACCESS-Open-Minds-Peer-Support-Guide-EN-vers20180723.pdf Accessed 2021 Jan 21.

Reviews

31. Gopalan G, Lee SJ, Harris R, Aciri MC, Munson MR. Utilization of peers in services for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges: A scoping review. *J Adolesc*. 2017 Feb;55:88-115. [Medline](#)
32. Youth MOVE National. Youth Peer-to-Peer Support: A Review of the Literature; 2013. <https://youthmovenational.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/YouthPeertoPeerLiteratureReviewFINAL.pdf?189db0&189db0> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
33. Barton J, Henderson J. Peer Support and Youth Recovery: A Brief Review of the Theoretical Underpinnings and Evidence. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 8(1), 2016, pp 1-17. <https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/cjfy/article/view/27140/19999> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
34. Center for Health Care Strategies. Family and Youth Peer Support Literature Review; 2013. https://www.chcs.org/media/FYPS_Literature_Review_FINAL.pdf Accessed 2021 Jan 21.

Unclear Study Design

35. Thompson C, Russell-Mayhew S, Saraceni R. Evaluating the effects of a peer-support model: reducing negative body esteem and disordered eating attitudes and behaviours in grade eight girls. *Eat*. 2012;20(2):113-126. [Medline](#)
Note: Study design was unclear.

Qualitative Studies

36. Shaw H, Rohde P, Stice E. Participant feedback from peer-led, clinician-led, and internet-delivered eating disorder prevention interventions. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2016 Dec;49(12):1087-1092. [Medline](#)
37. Morley CA, Kohrt BA. Impact of peer support on PTSD, hope, and functional impairment: A mixed-methods study of child soldiers in Nepal. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*. 2013;22(7):714-734.
Note: Mixed methods study.

Study Protocols

38. Chinoda S, Mutsinze A, Simms V, et al. Effectiveness of a peer-led adolescent mental health intervention on HIV virological suppression and mental health in Zimbabwe: protocol of a cluster-randomised trial. *Glob Ment Health (Camb)*. 2020;7:e23 [Medline](#)
39. Guay S, Tremblay N, Goncalves J, Bilodeau H, Geoffrion S. Effects of a peer support programme for youth social services employees experiencing potentially traumatic events: a protocol for a prospective cohort study. *BMJ Open*. 2017 06 24;7(6):e014405. [Medline](#)

Additional References

40. Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health. Youth peer support in a mental health context. Evidence In-Sight; 2016. <https://iknow-oce.esolutionsgroup.ca/api/ServiceItem/GetDocument?clientId=A1B5AA8F-88A1-4688-83F8-FF0A5B083EF3&documentId=941ad4d1-27db-4b67-b79b-d2f5c1b0a57a> Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
41. Evidence Summary What Is The Evidence For Peer Support In Youth Mental Health?; 2019. https://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Peer-work/Evidence-summary/What-is-the-evidence-for-peer-support-in-youth-men/Orygen_Peer_Support_Evidence-Summary_2020-pdf.aspx?ext=. Accessed 2021 Jan 21.
42. Arevian M. Training trainees, young activists, to conduct awareness campaigns about prevention of substance abuse among Lebanese/Armenian young people. *J Interprof Care*. 2010;24(2):173-182. [Medline](#)