

Symposium | Research on Individuals and Families : [Symposium 114] Integrating Lived Experience in Mental Health Research and Practice with Individuals and Families

🏠 Thu. Sep 25, 2025 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM JST | Thu. Sep 25, 2025 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM UTC 🏠 Session Room 3 (Large Hall A)

[Symposium 114] Integrating Lived Experience in Mental Health Research and Practice with Individuals and Families

Moderator: Oscar Jimenez-Solomon (New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University Medical Center)

[SY-114-02] Lived Expertise in Action: Peer Specialists Promoting Hope, Financial Empowerment, and Recovery

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Peer specialists—individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges trained to provide support— can offer unique contributions to culturally responsive and family-centered mental health care. Their role is especially critical in contexts of financial hardship, a powerful yet under-recognized social determinant of mental health.

This presentation draws on conceptual and empirical research from the past two decades in the U.S. and other high-income countries to explore the global relevance of peer-led approaches in family mental health. Research has shown that peer specialists can be effective in fostering self-efficacy and recovery. Drawing on expertise from their own recovery journeys and formal training, peer specialists engage others in culturally meaningful conversations about financial struggles and goals, build hope, model resilience, and offer practical guidance to individuals and families navigating adversity. Research suggests that peer support can promote financial self-efficacy, shame resilience, and perceived control—key mechanisms linked to suicide prevention and recovery—by integrating emotional support with practical tools such as budgeting, debt management, and access to basic resources. In family contexts, emerging evidence indicates that peer-led support can enhance engagement, reduce stigma, build trust with services, improve hope and family functioning.

Peer specialists can play important roles in the co-production of services and clinician training. Integrating peer specialists into systems of care has the potential to offer a transformative pathway to hope and equity in global contexts.

References

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