

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-114-01]

Integrating Lived Experience in Mental Health Research and Practice with Individuals and Families

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[SY-114-02]

Lived Expertise in Action: Peer Specialists Promoting Hope, Financial Empowerment, and Recovery

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[SY-114-03]

From 'circling around your research' to 'stronger together': Lessons from a collaborative research project in The Netherlands involving experts by experience of migration and mental health care.

Brand Alma¹, *Charlotte Clous² (1. Tilburg Law School, Tilburg University (Netherlands), 2. Centre for Transcultural Psychiatry Veldzicht (Netherlands))

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Keywords : lived experience、 family and culture、 epistemic justice、 disparities

This symposium highlights the growing recognition of lived experience as a valuable source of knowledge in mental health research and practice, especially at the intersection of family and culture. Historically excluded and dismissed as biased, lived experience is critical for addressing inequities and fostering inclusion in transcultural psychiatry. This knowledge includes insights from individuals with mental health diagnoses, clinicians, and researchers, as well as those who have experienced migration, discrimination, family conflict, and socioeconomic challenges. This symposium aims to advance inclusion and counter epistemic injustice through interdisciplinary approaches in psychiatry, psychotherapy, anthropology, and sociology from Sweden, Canada, The Netherlands, and USA. This symposium will provide introduction to key concepts such as lived experience, lived expertise, and epistemic authority and justice, emphasizing their relevance to addressing mental health inequities in culturally diverse families. The agenda includes four presentations: (1) The role of peer workers with lived expertise in providing psychosocial interventions, building trust, and fostering treatment engagement, with insights from a financial empowerment intervention for individuals at risk of suicide in USA; (2) Lessons from a collaborative research project (in The Netherlands) involving experts by experience of migration and mental healthcare in all stages, from topic selection to publication, reflecting on challenges, successes, and recommendations for future work; (3) The use of lived experience and self-disclosure in clinical practice with Middle Eastern migrant families, showcasing strategies to build trust and address intergenerational dynamics. Clinical observations from Sweden; (4) Relational theory and therapy are founded on the relational dialogue and values authentic self-disclosures between therapists and individual, family, group or community interlocutors. Judicious self-disclosure is the antidote to the myth of the therapeutic blank screen. A Q&A section will discuss how to integrate lived experience into research and practice.

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

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Keywords : Peer workers、Lived expertise、Financial empowerment、Culture and Family

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.

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Keywords : cultural psychiatry, lived experience, co-creation, CFI

In the midst of the COVID pandemic, a group of researchers and experts by experience crafted a research plan together, the way we collaborated was unique and innovative. The project, called 'circling around your research' demonstrates a co-creative approach to mental health research, with the involvement of experts by experience at every stage—including the selection of the research topic. In the initial phase, coordinated by two project coordinators, four online interactive workshops were held to foster equitable collaboration between academic researchers and individuals with lived experience of mental health care and migration. The workshops included personal storytelling, group dialogue, and structured online brainstorming sessions to create common language and identify shared research priorities. In the third session researchers presented topic proposals in the form of short pitches, after which the panel of experts by experience selected the final research focus: the influence of the Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI) on the therapeutic relationship. This topic closely aligned with the lived experiences and concerns of the expert panel. Following the successful grant application, the experts by experience continued their involvement as co-researchers—contributing to data collection and the collaborative writing of the project's protocol paper. This co-design process was part of a larger research initiative that systematically evaluated the impact of involving people with lived experience in all stages of mental health research. As such, the project served both as a study in itself and as a model for participatory research methods in clinical and academic settings. The presentation will highlight the design and facilitation of the co-creation process, key strategies for fostering inclusive dialogue, and structural conditions that support sustained involvement of experts by experience. By embedding experiential knowledge into the foundation of research design, this approach demonstrates the potential for more relevant, responsive, and ethically grounded mental health research.