

Symposium

📅 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

Moderator: Charlotte Clous (Centre for Transcultural Psychiatry Veldzicht), Oscar Jimenez-Solomon (New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University Medical Center)

[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.

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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.