Built by Peers, for Peers: The impact of peer design on an e-Learning module 'Boundaries in AOD peer work practice'

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Background:
A recent scoping review identifies role ambiguity, boundary complexity, and inadequate training as key contributors to burnout and reduced job satisfaction among AOD peer workers [1]. While co-designed AOD education improves relevance and engagement [2], this study extends the evidence base by examining the added value of fully peer-led design in strengthening authenticity, trust, and relevance.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:
An eLearning module on professional boundaries for AOD peer workers was developed using lived experience leadership, positioning peer workers as subject-matter experts. Iterative peer only consultation and a reflexive practice process ensured alignment with the relational realities of peer roles. An internal quality improvement (QI) activity evaluated the impact of peer design on interest, credibility, and relevance alongside other traditional QI markers.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:
A total of 108 participants completed post-module evaluation. Engagement was high, with 83–100% reporting increased interest due to peer design. Stratified analysis showed differential effects on credibility: 70.2% of AOD peer workers (n=47) reported greatly increased confidence, compared to 45.8% of the broader workforce (n=24), with 12.5% reporting no impact. AOD lived experience workers outside formal peer roles (n=10) reported the highest confidence (80.0%). Qualitative findings highlighted authenticity, relatability, and practical application—particularly for boundary-setting and navigating dual relationships—as key drivers of engagement, consistent with existing literature [3,4].

Conclusion and Implications:
Peer-designed training resources drive strong engagement across workforce groups, with more pronounced credibility effects among peer workers, suggesting lived experience carries particular epistemic authority. Positive impacts across the broader workforce indicate cross-disciplinary relevance, though effects are mediated by learner–content alignment. Beyond skill development, peer design may support cultural change by challenging knowledge hierarchies and strengthening recognition of lived experience, contributing to more inclusive, person-centred AOD practice.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare

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