

Peer worker experiences of workplace stigma and discrimination: a scoping review

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Background: In efforts to move towards hepatitis C elimination, more health services see the value of peer workers for increasing the numbers of people who inject drugs who access hepatitis C cure. However, peer-led drug user organisations report that peer workers often face workplace stigma and discrimination when partnering with health services or within research settings due to their injecting drug use and/or experience of bloodborne viruses. Therefore, this scoping review aims to map available literature and identify common experiences of stigma and discrimination affecting peer work in Australia and internationally.

Methods: This review used the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology for scoping reviews. Searches were conducted across four databases using the *Population, Concept, Context* (PCC) format and all studies screened against inclusion criteria by a minimum of two authors. Key characteristics of eligible papers, including positive and negative experiences of peer workers and influences of peer work, were extracted, and thematically analysed.

Results: Of the 55 eligible papers, most were from Canada ($n = 18$) and Australia ($n = 11$) and published since 2019 ($n = 35$). Barriers to peer work include inequitable/unequal pay, lack of clear measurements of success and appropriate support and management, and law enforcement practices. Key enablers to reducing workplace stigma and discrimination include ensuring role clarity by clearly and effectively communicating roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the peer role to non-peer staff/management, opportunities for training and leadership, flexibility in work practices and avenues for career progression.

Conclusion: This is the first scoping review focused specifically on peer experiences of stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Findings may inform processes for appropriately and equitably embedding peer models within organisations and assist with the expansion of the peer workforce to support hepatitis C elimination and harm reduction efforts.

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