

PEER SUPPORT SERVICE FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) PEOPLE LIVING WITH HEPATITIS B - THE EFFORTS, THE RISKS AND THE BENEFITS

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Background/Approach:

The issue of Hepatitis B (HBV) and CALD population attracted a special attention in recent years. We now have more publications, needs assessments and presentations at relevant conferences. However, literature about implementing peer support work by and with CALD people living with HBV is minimal.

PEACE Multicultural Services of Relationships Australia SA has been supporting CALD people living with HBV via counselling and case management. Our initial interest in the development of peer support service grew out of the widely spread acknowledgement of the beneficial capability of peer support work especially within the mental health field.

Analysis/Argument:

We attempted several times to co-design a peer support service with CALD people living with HBV, but as a result of clients' feedback we had to re-evaluate our processes and the way we engage with potential peer supporters. Their feedback forced us to reflect on our privileges and the possible harm/risks that we may cause the person involved. As a result, we completed a comprehensive literature review, conducted a workshop to learn from other workers' experiences and we asked people living with HBV to comment on our learning.

Outcome/Results:

Developing a CALD specific peer support service is more complex than initially anticipated. There are many variables that make some people more vulnerable than others, all of which may greatly influence the successfulness and sustainability of the service. Workers in this field need to poses high degree of cross cultural competencies, flexibility and ability to understand the issue of effort vs reward from the CALD person's perspectives.

Conclusions/Applications:

We have generated a number of hypotheses that are crucial in creating an effective and sustainable Hepatitis B peer support within a multicultural context. This presentation will provide insight into the understanding and responses to the development of such a service.