

CADTH RAPID RESPONSE REPORT: REFERENCE LIST

# Online Peer Support for the Treatment of Mental Illness: Clinical Effectiveness and Guidelines

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## Research Questions

1. What is the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness?
2. What are the evidence-based guidelines associated with the use of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness?

## Key Findings

Two randomized controlled trials were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness.

## Methods

A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, Ovid Medline, The Cochrane Library, University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. No methodological filters were applied to limit retrieval by publication type. The search was limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2012 to August 25, 2017.

## Selection Criteria

One reviewer screened citations and selected studies based on the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Selection Criteria**

<b>Population</b>	Adults with mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], sexual harassment/abuse)
<b>Intervention</b>	Online peer support
<b>Comparator</b>	Q1: In-person peer support; Online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT); Group therapy; No treatment Q2: No comparator
<b>Outcomes</b>	Q1: Clinical effectiveness (e.g., reduction in symptoms, improvement in quality of life) Q2: Guidelines
<b>Study Designs</b>	Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, nonrandomized studies, and guidelines

## Results

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, and evidence-based guidelines.

Two randomized controlled trials were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of online peer support for the treatment of adults with mental illness. No relevant health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, non-randomized studies, or evidence-based guidelines were identified.

Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

### Health Technology Assessments

No literature identified.

### Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

No literature identified.

### Randomized Controlled Trials

1. Crisp D, Griffiths K, Mackinnon A, Bennett K, Christensen H. An online intervention for reducing depressive symptoms: secondary benefits for self-esteem, empowerment and quality of life. *Psychiatry Res.* 2014 Apr 30;216(1):60-6.  
[PubMed: PM24534125](#)
2. Griffiths KM, Mackinnon AJ, Crisp DA, Christensen H, Bennett K, Farrer L. The effectiveness of an online support group for members of the community with depression: a randomised controlled trial. *Plos one.* 2012;7(12):e53244, 2012.  
[PubMed: PM23285271](#)

### Non-Randomized Studies

No literature identified.

### Guidelines and Recommendations

No literature identified.

## Appendix — Further Information

### Previous CADTH Reports

3. Integrated peer support programs for the treatment of professionals with post-traumatic stress disorder or operational stress injuries: clinical effectiveness [Internet]. Ottawa: CADTH; 2016 Dec 20. [2017 Aug 31]. Available from: <https://www.cadth.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/htis/2017/RB1051%20PTSD%20Groups%20Final.pdf>
4. Peer support for mental health disorder management: a review of the clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and guidelines [Internet]. Ottawa: CADTH; 2013 Dec 23. [cited 2017 Aug 31]. Available from: <https://www.cadth.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/htis/sep-2014/RC0494A%20Peer%20support%20for%20mental%20health-e.pdf>

### Randomized Controlled Trials - Alternative Comparator

5. Dean J, Potts HW, Barker C. Direction to an internet support group compared with online expressive writing for people with depression and anxiety: a randomized trial. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2016 May 17;3(2):e12, 2016. [PubMed: PM27189142](#)

### Non-Randomized Studies

#### *Alternative Intervention*

6. Tomasino KN, Lattie EG, Ho J, Palac HL, Kaiser SM, Mohr DC. Harnessing peer support in an online intervention for older adults with depression. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2017 May 3. [PubMed: PM28571785](#)

#### *Alternative Comparator*

7. Goodwin BC, Ford DE, Hsiung RC, Houston TK, Fogel J, Van Voorhees BW. First, do no harm: referring primary care patients with depression to an internet support group. *Telemed J E Health*. 2017 Jun 28. [PubMed: PM28657881](#)
8. Park A, Conway M. Longitudinal changes in psychological states in online health community members: understanding the long-term effects of participating in an online depression community. *J Med Internet Res*. 2017 Mar 20;19(3):e71, 2017. [PubMed: PM28320692](#)
9. Horgan A, McCarthy G, Sweeney J. An evaluation of an online peer support forum for university students with depressive symptoms. *Arch Psychiatr Nurs*. 2013. Apr;27(2):84-9. [PubMed: PM23540518](#)

## Review Articles

10. Callan JA, Wright J, Siegle GJ, Howland RH, Kepler BB. Use of computer and mobile technologies in the treatment of depression. Arch Psychiatr Nurs. 2017 Jun;31(3):311-8.  
[PubMed: PM28499574](#)
11. Harding C, Chung H. Behavioral health support and online peer communities: international experiences [Internet]. Mhealth. 2016 [cited 2017 Aug 31];2:43. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5344138>  
[PubMed: PM28293613](#)

## Additional References

12. Kiosses DN. Internet delivery and peer support: new venues for psychosocial interventions of late-life depression. Am J Geriatr Psychiatry. 2017 Jul 8.  
[PubMed: PM28801113](#)