

DirectLine peer navigation: Findings of a pilot study to connect helpline callers to peer support

Annette Peart^{1,2}, Freya Horn^{1,2}, Bosco Rowland^{1,2}, Shalini Arunogiri^{1,2}, Victoria Manning^{1,2}, Dan I. Lubman^{1,2,3}

¹Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University, Richmond, Australia, ²Turning Point, Richmond, Australia, ³Monash Addiction Research Centre, Monash University, Frankston, Australia

Presenter's email: annette.peart@monash.edu

Introduction / Issues: There are many barriers to accessing care for people experiencing addiction, compounded by high levels of stigma. Services need to target known barriers such as stigma, accessibility and timeliness, and support people to navigate a convoluted system. Peer navigation – where peer workers with lived experience of recovery share their experiences and support others to connect to services – has potential to overcome barriers. The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of peer navigation integrated into Victoria's alcohol and other drug telephone helpline, DirectLine.

Method / Approach: A peer navigation intervention for people experiencing addiction not enrolled in treatment, was designed and piloted. Eligible callers (n =34) were referred to a peer worker for six telephone sessions. Outcomes were assessed at baseline, exit and three-month follow up. Controlling for baseline measures, linear mixed models assessed changes in recovery capital, self-efficacy, and substance use severity.

Results: Analyses showed significant improvements in recovery capital (B = 2.54; $p < .001$) and self-efficacy (B = 0.18; $p = .015$) at exit and three-months. Participants showed significant reductions in substance use severity from baseline to three-months (AUDIT: B = 16.40; $p < .001$; DUDIT: (B = 8.09; $p = 0.22$). Those who completed exit data were significantly older (Mean difference = 12.93 years).

Discussions and Conclusions: This is the first study to assess the impact of peer navigation for people experiencing substance use concerns, accessed through a helpline. Our findings indicate that peer workers could play an important role in telephone addiction counselling settings. The findings support investing in a larger trial.

Implications for Practice or Policy: If stronger causal evidence can be established, the integration of both lived experience and professional knowledge to support participants, to increase recovery skills and assets, could become standard practice.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: SA has received speaker honoraria from Camurus and Indivior. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study. This work was supported by a Portland House Foundation Grant. SA was supported by an NHMRC Investigator Grant (2008193). DL was supported by an NHMRC Investigator Grant (1174953).