

Uncovering what mental health and recovery means to youth ages 12-15: A Deliberative Dialogue

Cassia Warren, Sonya Tsou, Taite Beggs, Roryann Woodburne

Summary

Younger youth ages 12-15 often lack a voice in health care research and practice. Instead, parents/caregivers or service providers make decisions about their care, usually without input from the youth themselves. As such, there is little known about how youth understand their mental health and what their needs are for recovery. We use patient-oriented research methods in the stages of design, collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination to gather evidence on what is meaningful in the mental health journey of youth 12-15 through qualitative interviews. The resulting themes relate to connecting with others, nature, and themselves; doing things that they enjoy; and being in trusting, safe, and judgement-free environments. In this workshop, youth will facilitate deliberative dialogues on: Where would this information improve your service experience or programs aimed at youth? How can it be used to positively impact youth ages 12-15? And what knowledge mobilization is needed to get there?

Engagement

Youth engagement is at the core of this research project designed to measure what matters in mental health and recovery for youth ages 12-15. We use patient-oriented research methods to include youth voices throughout the project by 1) establishing a Youth Advisory Committee comprised of 5 youth ages 12-15, and 2) hiring Youth Researchers who have co-developed the interview guide and recruitment materials, facilitated and coded the interviews, and informed the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The youth involved gain experience in the research project and build capacity for youth ages 12-15 in health care.

Learning objectives

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Describe what matters to youth ages 12-15 when thinking about mental health and recovery.
2. Apply deliberative dialogue and patient-orientated research methods into their own projects.
3. Apply creative and meaningful knowledge translation activities to capture the attention of youth and other stakeholder groups, including understanding the types of activities best suited for each group.

Success would mean the youth co-facilitators have a positive experience leading the workshop and learn from this experience, and the workshop participants walk away thinking about how to engage with youth or other participants in their own work.

Key messages and takeaways

Participants will walk away from this workshop having participated in a deliberative dialogue, including a discussion about what worked well, lessons learned, and how they can use this method in their own projects. During the workshop we will also co-create a list of creative and meaningful knowledge translation activities and identify suitable audience(s) for each activity.

Summary of evidence

This work is evidence-generating as there is little known about how youth ages 12-15 understand their mental health and recovery needs. Current measurement tools used in clinical practice were developed for adult or older youth populations and may not be fit for purpose for ages 12-15. This work will be evaluated by youth through means of validation and interpretation to ensure that the data being generated reflects their voices and what is meaningful to them. This work aims to build a knowledge base that will inform ongoing work to develop scales fit to measure mental health outcomes for young youth.