

Commentary on "I don't know how to find my way in the world": Contributions of User-Led Research to Transforming Mental Health Practice

An Argument for Collaboration in Methods to Help People with Mental Illness

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The paper by Leahy, Davidson and colleagues argues that the consumer voice is represented directly in research. It vividly describes the challenges and aspirations of mental health

users. It also describes the importance of having an office of consumer affairs in their upper management. And there are other striking and concrete examples of the importance

methodology, community participatory research, and its value in mental health research. I think it is imperative to include the end stage user/beneficiary of the research in

the design of research. This paper offers important implications for mental health care delivery. It has not always been easy or smooth reconciling the different

these methods in conjunction with more conventional quantitative methods

objectives and priorities of providers, policy makers and sometimes fractious. But over the past decade, we've seen a trend emerging of a growing mutual respect and recognition that

The consumer movement in America has moved from one primarily focused on advocacy of the mental health system to a much broader agenda including direct involvement in the public policy arena. Over these years, we've seen state governments adopt consumer affairs offices, and major federal agencies such

well as a growing mutual respect and recognition that all consumers represent health system needs. In the major players—consumers, providers, family members, advocates, represented in our significant discussions. The unique perspectives of the various parties have added richness to debates and contributed to greater innovation.

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Research Methodology

functioning from the very practical instru-

(CPR) is an exciting innovation in research methods that highlights the important role of the community and its members. It represents a form of qualitative research that focuses

are lives. One strength of this method is the emphasis on the lived experience of the development of the illness. CPR provides for a feedback loop where information is gathered from a community, analyzed, and returned to the community for application.

Involvement of Beneficiary in Research Process

leagues presents a strong argument for the importance and relevance of community

This paper demonstrates the very centrality of the lived experience, which is critical to the development of the illness. The authors clearly describe the ability to negotiate their world. This work is by consumers for consumers but of great value to clinicians and others.

In quantitative research, personal experiences that cannot capture the richness of the

narrative, the description of these experi-

the cumulative influence these factors have on a person's ability to function in the community. The authors clearly describe the complexity involved in trying to fully understand the many factors of and impediments to recovery, particularly poverty, isolation, and loneliness.

such as symptom reduction and improved

cannot be separated.

The community participatory method of research is empowering. It recognizes and respects the challenges faced by consumers

questions is respectful. The authors did not rely on the more traditional review of the record nor did they require the filling out of forms. The authors clearly describe the process so the interviewees were not confined by narrow responses.

Future Applications

This study by Davidson and his colleagues presents a strong argument for the importance and relevance of community

initiated by consumers with evidence from an established researcher. It is an important contribution to understanding the challenges and barriers faced by people living with mental illness. The use of community participatory research does not represent an either/or situation. It is important to find ways that the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative methods

mentary to the recovery experience

ers faced by people with mental illness. We need to explore the collaborative benefits of

that many of the more conventional funding enterprises clearly favor the classic quantitative methodological approach, the randomized control trial. We need more integrated methodologies that capture the strengths of personal experience while ensuring rigorous in an intellectually honest and rigorous way.