

**From Struggle to Strength: Peer Specialists' Insights in  
Healthcare Settings**

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## **Abstract**

### **Background**

Medication nonadherence presents a significant challenge across various populations, leading to preventable deaths and substantial healthcare costs annually. Particularly within psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder, nonadherence rates remain high, contributing to adverse outcomes including disability and increased mortality. Factors influencing nonadherence include treatment side effects, stigma, and logistical barriers. Among these challenges, peer support specialists have become a promising intervention, with lived experiences to enhance patient outcomes.

### **Method**

This paper explores the role of peer support specialists in addressing medication nonadherence within behavioral health settings. Structured interviews with three peer specialists from Places for People, a Certified Community Behavioral Health Organization, reveal their personal experiences and professional contributions.

### **Data Analysis**

Findings emphasize the profound impact of childhood experiences, familial attitudes towards mental health, and personal struggles with medication adherence. Peer specialists play a crucial role in closing gaps in treatment services, developing trust, and providing support personalized to individual needs.

## **Results**

The interviews highlight the necessity of peer specialists in enhancing patient care and navigating treatment complexities. These insights focus the importance of integrating peer support into healthcare systems to improve patient outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

## **Conclusion**

As healthcare practices evolve, incorporating peer support specialists into multidisciplinary teams creates a promising strategy to enhance patient-centered care and promote recovery in individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. Future research and educational initiatives should continue to prioritize the integration and recognition of peer support as a major component of complete healthcare.