



Experiences of Community Members Engaged in eCPR (Emotional Connecting, Empowering, Revitalizing) Training: Qualitative Focus Group Study

Amanda L. Myers, MPH, Mbita Mbaio, LICSW, Arya Kadakia, BS, Shira Collings, MS, Karen L. Fortuna, PhD, LICSW

Background: The United Nations has called for wide-scale community mental health psychoeducation; however, few programs currently exist. Emotional Connecting, Empowering, Revitalizing (eCPR) is a community education and training program developed by individuals with a lived experience of mental health challenges or trauma. It is designed to provide community members with skills and confidence to support someone experiencing mental health challenges.

Study Objective: This study examined the user experiences of diverse community members engaged in eCPR training. This study reviewed their attitudes toward the training and opportunities for improvement in future implementations of training.

Methods:

- 560 individuals, including peer support specialists, service users, clinicians, family members, and nonprofit leaders participated in virtual eCPR trainings between April 20, 2020, and July 31, 2020.
- Of the 560 participants, 31 individuals participated in virtual focus groups.
- The authors developed an interview guide to guide semi-structured focus groups. Questions focused on participant experiences with the trainings and examined the impact the eCPR training had on participants.
- Qualitative data were analyzed using the rigorous and accelerated data reduction method, which converts raw textual data into concise data tables to develop a codebook, and thematic analysis was performed to identify common themes.

Research Findings:

- eCPR may benefit individuals from multiple, diverse demographics.
- It can enhance their ability to connect with others, to understand what it means to be with someone who is experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis, to accept their own emotions, and to be confident in being their most authentic self in both their work and personal lives.
- Evidence indicates that participants primarily had a positive training experience. Participants found eCPR training to be a valuable resource for learning new skills when engaging with an individual who may be in distress or experiencing a mental health crisis. These skills included active listening, integrating shared experiences into practice, the ability to connect with others on an emotional level even on a web-based platform, and how to emotionally hold someone in their time of distress and need.

Conclusions: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting increase or exacerbation of mental health challenges, the United Nations recognizes an increased need for community-based support and wide-scale community mental health psychoeducation. The eCPR training program answers this call by providing a framework for engaging in community-based support without a clinical degree or formal environment. It has been proven to be feasible and effective in its delivery. eCPR is a practice that community members can use to help one another through difficult times and may enhance social connection in a time of disconnection and physical distancing. It is a practice that community members can use to help one another through difficult times and may enhance social connection in a time of disconnection and physical distancing.

Future Recommendations:

- Expand on the impacts reflected in this study by examining the impact of eCPR training on subsets of the population.
- Examine the impact of the training has on participants based on their age, mental health diagnosis, role, and race.
- Future research can be directed to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of in-person eCPR training versus that of eCPR training delivered in a web-based environment. Future research should also evaluate the impact that implementing eCPR has on community mental health as a whole (i.e., levels of anxiety, depression, and distress; feelings of loneliness and isolation; and suicidality).
- Examine the impact of eCPR training when implemented in various community settings (i.e., schools, police stations, medical offices, and apartment complexes).

To access the full-text publication, visit: <https://formative.jmir.org/2022/6/e32219/>