

Lived experience of carers in supporting their family member with a mental health condition to drive a motor vehicle

Authors: Carolyn Dun, Glen Dollman & Megan Turville

Introduction

- For most people, driving a motor vehicle is an important part of adult life.
- Motorists with a mental health condition need to be aware of their responsibilities such as not driving when unwell.
- Carers may have a role in supporting community access of individuals, which may include driver training, private transport and use of public transport.
- Family/carer peer support workers have held or hold unpaid caregiving responsibilities in support of someone living with a mental health condition who is accessing mental health services, and they use knowledge and skill arising from their lived experience of caring
- There is minimal research on how staff including lived experience workers can support carers with consumer driving.

Aim of Presentation

To explore the experiences of carers working in the lived experience workforce, in supporting family members with a mental health condition to drive.



Setting

Northern Health Mental Health Division, Melbourne, Australia



Method

Ethics

- Approved by human ethics committee at organisation
- Participation voluntary with Informed consent

Research Design

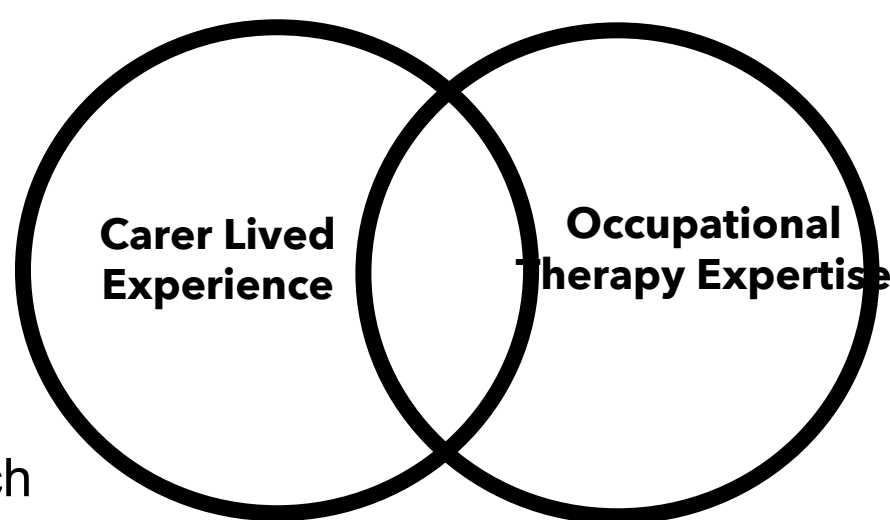
- Interpretive Paradigm and Co-design approach

Participants & Recruitment

- Convenience sampling. Recruitment via Email (N=15)
- Semi-Structured Interviews between May – June 2023
- Interviews via video conference average 39 mins (range 25-59 mins).
Transcribed verbatim

Data Analysis

- Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)



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Participants' demographics

No. of family members carers for

- 9 participants carer for 1 family member
- 2 participants carer for 2 family members

Family relationship of person cared for

- Parent
- Adult children
- Partner
- Sibling
- Grandparent

Worker Roles

- 4 Carer Consultant or Lived Experience Manager Roles
- 7 Carer Support Worker Roles

Services included

- Inpatient Units
- Community Mental Health Teams
- Prevention & Recovery Care

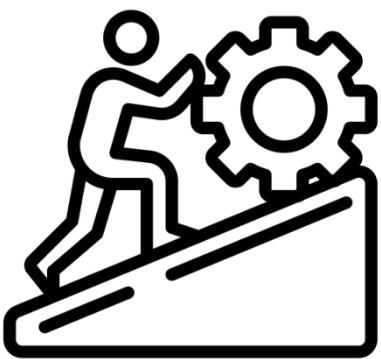
Results: Four Themes

1. Carers hold so much



Carers hold a lot emotionally, such as anxiety and worry. They try to intervene and prevent consumers driving when mentally unwell, by *hiding the car keys* and may need to transport consumers which is stressful.

2. Complex challenges to support community access



Carers try and assist consumers with learning and returning to driving or using other transport but face complex challenges during this process.

3. Driving needs to be on everyone's radar



Mental health clinicians tend not to discuss driving. Carers want clinicians to check in with consumers and carers about driving.

4. Tailored driving support needs



Carers need information and education from clinicians to support safe consumer driving, as well as direct support of consumers, to enable community access via driving or other transport.

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Discussion



- Clinicians need to consider and support consumers' community access; driving and other means of transport
- Carers need information and education to understand when a consumer is safe and fit to drive
- Driving supports consumers' independence, and may support carers' recovery and decrease caring demands with transportation
- Emerging role of Peer Support Workers (PSW) to assist carers and consumers with driving

Limitations

- Participants from only 1 public mental health service
- Carers Peer support roles may not be reflective of carer PSW roles in other mental health services
- Participants' perspectives may not be reflective of current carers

Research needed

- To explore carers' experiences of receiving mental health services and how staff can provide information, education and partner with them to support safe consumer driving.
- To explore benefits to consumers and carers when the mental health workforce genuinely partners to support community access/

Conclusion

Partner with family members to actively support consumers' community access

Don't assume family are available to transport

Provide information and education to carers about safe consumer driving

References

Dun, C., Palmer, C., & Turville, M. (2025). Driving a motor vehicle and living with a mental health condition: The personal and professional experiences of consumer lived experience staff. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 72(2), e13000. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.13000>

Dun, C, Swan, J, Hitch, D, & Vlachou, V. (2020). Occupational therapy driver assessments with mental health consumers: A mixed-methods study. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 67, 330–340. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12652>

For Driving Guidelines



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