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# Implementation of a Volunteer Lived-Experience Trauma Peer Support Worker into Trauma Service

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Service Improvement

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## Summary

A lived-experience Peer Support Worker enhances the patient journey following multi-trauma as an extension of the 'always care' philosophy of the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service (GCHHS) by

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providing the added support of a trauma survivor with lived experience of the patient journey through the GCHHS Trauma Service. Aside from the physical aspects, there are significant psychological impacts for patients suffering significant trauma, including fear, anxiety, hopelessness, stress, and loss of autonomy which may prolong recovery, reduce quality of life and impact future healthcare requirements. A trauma peer-support worker can utilise their experience, skills, knowledge and application of shared learnings to provide psychosocial support to assist with:

- recovery focus

- goal setting

- instilling hope and positivity

- journey reflection

- empowerment of autonomy and self-determination

- improved treatment compliance

- expedited recovery and healing

- patient and family/carer liaison

- enhancing the patient/family/carer communication with clinical teams

- increased patient and family/carer satisfaction

- complementing the multidisciplinary team

## Key dates

Jan 2022

## Implementation sites

Gold Coast

## Partnerships

Trauma Survivors Network (TSN)

## Key Contacts

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## **Aim**

Improve patient wellbeing, patient flow, enhance recovery in a consumer-led environment. Assist patients in long term recovery by allowing them the opportunity to 'give back' and have peer discussions with consumers that are in a similar position to where they once were.

## **Benefits**

This model is unique to Trauma services in Queensland, and has proven benefits across the entire patient journey from the patient, family, staff, hospital and HHS perspective. Further investigation into the Trauma data to investigate impact on length of stay, quality of life, etc is currently being planned. Benefits seen (in the planning stages of formal evaluation):

- Improved patient confidence in self-management within the discharge planning process
- Reduced re-presentations to the Emergency Department
- Improved treatment compliance
- Improved patient safety
- Improved quality of life and sense of recovery
- Improved workplace environment for staff

## **Background**

It is well documented that patients who suffer significant trauma do endure a prolonged and difficult recovery journey.

## **Solutions Implemented**

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The Gold Coast Trauma Service currently has commenced a volunteer model Peer Support Worker that operates under the framework for the Trauma Survivors Network (TSN). They have undertaken all required hospital mandatory training, and work in conjunction with the Trauma Nurse Navigator and provide a generous donation of time to give back and support current inpatients who have suffered major trauma. They participate on ward rounds and bring any concerns for clarification back to the clinical Trauma Team as required. The Peer worker also assists to coordinate follow up Peer-Support groups as part of the Trauma Survivors Network (TSN) and hosts the yearly Trauma Survivors Day at GCUH. The Peer Worker describes the immense benefits of their own personal recovery in being able to give back to current trauma survivors.

## Evaluation and Results

Patient surveys, trauma data, feedback from clinical care team. Patients, families and carers: The evidence demonstrates peer mentoring and support has immense benefits for patients and families. They are appreciative of hearing a consumer perspective and being able to ask questions to a non-medical staff member. Patients admitted to the hospital have reported huge benefits of speaking to someone with lived experience, and the assistance to their recovery progress. Staff: With the implementation of the volunteer peer support worker, clinical staff have reported that patients are more engaged in their care, participate in rehabilitation and strive to achieve goals. Improved psychological and practical support for patients reduces their level of stress and anxiety, which can result in more positive interactions with all staff members. By partnering with a consumer to improve patient care, the workplace environment and work satisfaction is naturally enhanced. Organisation: Gold Coast HHS has been at the forefront of innovative models of trauma care delivery, and programs such as this ensure that we continue to be leaders in the delivery of world-class healthcare. The volunteer Peer Support program has already gained positive media exposure. As stated in the recent Trauma Verification by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons: "The trauma survivor network is exemplary. The level of commitment and time invested by the trauma service to continually strive to improve the care to patients and their families is tremendous. It is clear that the patients and their families are the focus from arrival at emergency and throughout the patient journey, all the way through to rehabilitation and beyond discharge" This model is in line with the NSQHS Standards "Partnering with consumers", "Comprehensive care" and "Communicating for safety".

## Lessons Learnt

Some of the lessons learnt include not rushing into the project when the approval to implement was given. Instead, it is recommended to plan out carefully an outcomes-based approach, whereby data and evaluation would be simpler (some redesign was needed). On recruitment of trauma survivors, it is recommended to utilise a thorough screening process, to ensure the appropriate trauma survivors are recruited, and be ready for the role. This also includes the orientation and onboarding into the "Volunteer system" a separate orientation package was needed due to the uniqueness of this volunteer role.

