

## Special Publications in Peer Support



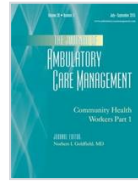
### [Key Features of Peer Support in Chronic Disease Prevention and Management](#)

Health Affairs, Sept 2015



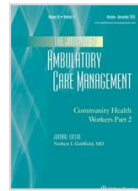
### [Peers for Progress Supplement](#)

Annals of Family Medicine, Aug 2015



### [Community Health Workers Pt 1](#)

Journal of Ambulatory Care Management, July/Sept 2015



### [Community Health Workers Pt 2](#)

Journal of Ambulatory Care Management, Oct/Dec 2015

### Wide Breadth of Research

An increasing number of research articles on peer support and community health workers are published every year. The second half of this year saw the release of three journal issues devoted exclusively to this field of research. Additionally, Peers for Progress published an analysis and commentary in *Health Affairs*.

For a supplement of the *Annals of Family Medicine*, Louise Acheson and Ed Fisher curated ten articles from [Peers for Progress collaborators](#), ranging widely across continents and across topics. Starting with seven original research articles that expand the evidence base for the benefits of peer support, the supplement is rounded out with three articles on methodology, dissemination in primary care, and research ethics.

Across two issues of the *Journal of Ambulatory Care Management*, E. Lee Rosenthal and Noelle Wiggins mustered twenty articles on community health workers. This three-part series in the *Journal of Ambulatory Care Management* is the second installment of a [previous effort in 2011](#).

### What's in the Peers for Progress Supplement?

As peer support gains acceptance as a feasible, effective, and sustainable health care solution, the attention has now turned to understanding how it can be widely implemented in real world settings. The opening editorial to the *Annals of Family Medicine* Supplement summarizes the key findings of Peers for Progress investigators and looks toward the dissemination and broad implementation of peer support.

Within the original research articles, investigators reported benefits of peer support for Latinos and African Americans in improving their self-management of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. When it comes to peer supporters themselves, investigators found that low-income volunteers are capable of utilizing evidence-based health coaching to help patients, though they may not use the specific strategies on which they were trained. One project in Hong Kong observed that serving as a diabetes peer supporter was found to protect against worsening blood glucose control.

Looking at health care systems, several articles suggested that peer supporters can add value to

organizations such as community health centers and patient-centered medical homes. One paper showed that peer support provides benefits on top of already good patient care; among an insured population of Latino adults, peer mentoring is associated with glycemic control, reduced social isolation, and extension of benefits to families.

The final piece in the supplement is a commentary on the challenges in peer support research when it comes to ethical reviews. Reflecting on their vast experience, researchers agreed that the breadth of issues raised in ethics review slows research and may increase patient burdens, thereby hindering outreach to disadvantaged groups.

### ***Journal of Ambulatory Care Management* Series on Community Health Workers**

The *Journal of Ambulatory Care Management* has a history of providing a platform to discuss issues that are important to community health workers. Reflecting the “nonconventional” nature of CHWs in health care, the journal publishes pieces which are not commonly found in academic journals, such as “CHW Voices From the Field”. So far, two of three planned special issues have been released. The three special issues will include nearly 20 research articles and commentaries and 7 “CHW Voices From the Field”.

According to the editors, E. Lee Rosenthal and Noelle Wiggins, “All 3 issues explore CHWs' role in advocating for their profession, as well as contributions of CHWs to health care reform in the United States and, specifically, CHW integration into patient-centered primary care homes. This first issue puts special focus on CHWs' role in advocating for their communities and how CHWs can increase their influence. The second issue will focus on CHW education, training, and capacity building, as well as highlighting CHWs' role in promoting healthier environments including opportunities for physical activity. The third issue will continue to explore CHWs' advocacy on behalf of their profession and resulting practices, norms, and policies at both the regional and national levels.”

### **What's Next**

Nowadays, conversations about health reform and patient-centered care seem to inevitably include questions about the contributions of peer support and community health workers. Special publications like the ones highlighted here advance the field by helping practitioners develop and improve programs, and by encouraging policymakers to support solutions that work. We hope that these special publications add more weight to the momentum that will our field to the tipping point.