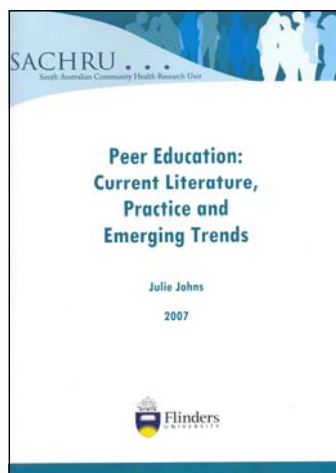


Peer Education: Current Literature, Practice and Emerging Trends

Julie Johns, 2007



This literature review was conducted by SACHRU in response to increasing enquiries regarding the design, implementation and evaluation of peer education initiatives and builds upon a previous literature review of peer education undertaken by SACHRU in 2001. Peer education has been a popular method of health promotion since the 1990's. Recently, the use of peer education has expanded with the approach increasingly being adopted in other fields across the life span.

Peer education encompasses a variety of terms such as peer support, peer led initiatives, peer approaches, peer participation, peer counselling, peer helping and peer mentoring. The approach is informed by a variety of theories that can be used to assist in designing and evaluating programs. As peer education usually occurs as one component of a broader program of intervention, the impact and effectiveness of peer education as a stand alone activity has been difficult to evaluate. Recent studies of peer education are showing signs that it has a positive impact on factors contributing to risk-taking behaviour, particularly over the short term. There is also some evidence that peer education may be more effective with lower risk than higher risk individuals, but that it can be a useful strategy for reaching "hidden" populations. Peer education is increasingly being promoted as a useful approach for working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, people experiencing chronic disease or disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This literature review explores the theory and implementation of peer education together with a review of the available evidence. A summary of common themes outlining essential considerations for "successful" peer education programs is provided. A brief discussion of the role of E-health technology in peer education is also presented.



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