

Roles and Expectations of Facilitators RACMA Peer Support Group Pilot Program

While facilitation skills are an accepted skill in RACMA Fellows, peer support groups/Community of Practice do require the application of these skills in a specific environment. The literature indicates that facilitation needs to be ongoing and ideally done by a group that understands the participants. To avoid facilitator fatigue, additional facilitators should be identified.

The facilitator must make sure that the rules of engagement are respected and adhered to. They are responsible for starting and finishing the session on time. The available time is one hour, and this usually accommodates two presentations. One of these may be a follow-up from a previous discussion. During the session the facilitator needs to monitor how everyone in the group are engaging with each other. The facilitator may identify someone trying unsuccessfully to speak and needs to ensure that they are given an opportunity to engage with the group. Alternatively, someone else may be talking too much and may need to be gently reminded that, while it's good to talk, it's also good to listen. As with any kind of small group work, it is vital for the members to feel that the group is a safe place in which to talk about how they feel, and how they have performed, without being criticised or ridiculed.

The experience from other colleges suggests that specific training is required to perform effectively as a facilitator in a peer support group. This will require development and could be delivered online.

In addition, effective facilitation also requires dedicated administration support to coordinate meetings, themes and topics for discussion.

The literature suggests that for virtual peer support groups, dedicated IT support is also required, as well as an appropriate IT platform. The pilot program will utilise the Zoom platform.

Eligibility criteria for facilitators includes the following:

- RACMA Fellows with greater than five years' experience post Fellowship would be preferred.
- Prepared and motivated to undertake facilitator training if the pilot program identifies a requirement for training.
- Core competencies include strong facilitation and collaborative communication style.

Specific responsibilities include the following:

- The PSG facilitator is expected to chair and manage the virtual meeting requirements for the PSG.
- The PSG facilitator will be tasked with monitoring and reducing any potential conflicts of interest that may arise throughout the group.
- The PSG facilitator will be tasked with coordinating any evaluation activity within the group as required.
- If required by volume, alignments may be made to match facilitators and participants based on jurisdiction, regions (e.g. metropolitan, rural and regional), and Medical Administration portfolios (e.g. Australian Defence Health System and Private Hospitals).