

# Opportunities and Design Considerations for Peer Support in a Hospital Setting

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## Abstract

*Although research has demonstrated improved outcomes for outpatients who receive peer support—such as through online health communities, support groups, and mentoring systems—hospitalized patients have few mechanisms to receive such valuable support. To explore the opportunities for a hospital-based peer support system, we administered a survey to 146 pediatric patients and caregivers, and conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve patients and three caregivers in a children's hospital. Our analysis revealed that hospitalized individuals need peer support for five key purposes: (1) to ask about medical details—such as procedures, treatments, and medications; (2) to learn about healthcare providers; (3) to report and prevent medical errors; (4) to exchange emotional support; and (5) to manage their time in the hospital. In this paper, we examine these themes and describe potential barriers to using a hospital-based peer support system. We then discuss the unique opportunities and challenges that the hospital environment presents when designing for peer support in this setting.*

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