

Expanding Access, Enhancing Equity: POCT for Hepatitis B and C in South-East Queensland's CALD Communities.

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Point of Care Testing (POCT) for hepatitis C (HCV) is not new in Australia in large thanks to the National Australian HCV Point-of-Care Testing Program, a collaboration between the UNSW and the Kirby Institute. What is new is the undertaking by the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland's (ECCQ) Love Health Program to focus on the culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Additional to testing for HCV antibodies the program is also performing hepatitis B (HBV) surface antigen testing (HbsAg) at the same time.

The Love Health Program's bilingual community health workers provide comprehensive education about HBV and HCV to potential participants before obtaining their consent and conducting testing. Testing is undertaken in various community settings.

Awareness of the availability of testing is promoted through social media (in English and other languages), local ethnic newspapers, community meetings, information stalls, workshops, and word of mouth. The program developed a flowchart to guide the process and translated survey forms into Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, streamlining the process and making it more efficient.

During a six-month period from August 2024 to January 2025, we provided testing for 328 people with 28 people having positive results for HCV Antibodies, and 4 people positive for HbsAg. Our results demonstrate great engagement from communities with testing being performed for individuals from more than 23 ethnic backgrounds but mainly in the Chinese and Vietnamese communities.

POCT in the CALD communities of the South-east Queensland area performed by ECCQ whilst unfunded is a positive initiative to raising awareness and enabling greater understanding, reduction in stigma and discrimination, and improved engagement in care for people living with HBV and HCV and for the greater community as a whole.

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