

Every Yarn Counts: Reaching clients of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations with a destigmatizing hepatitis C health promotion campaign

Gibbs, D¹, Christensen, S¹, Adamson, E¹, Mercer, D¹, Goodwin, T², Hellard, M^{1,3}, Combo, T^{1}, Pedrana, A^{1, 3*} on behalf of the Every Yarn Counts National Reference Group*

¹Eliminate Hepatitis C Australia (EC Australia), Burnet Institute, ²Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, ³Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine, Monash University

*T Combo and A Pedrana share senior authorship

Background: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at increased risk of hepatitis C virus (HCV). *Every Yarn Counts (EYC)* is a national HCV health promotion campaign co-designed with a reference group of representatives from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs). The campaign was implemented in 9 ACCHOs Australia-wide, and featured positive and destigmatizing messages, merchandise giveaways, financial incentives for HCV testing and treatment, and education and clinical training for ACCHO staff. The campaign aimed to reach all clients of ACCHOs, rather than targeting specific at-risk groups. We present preliminary results from a mixed methods evaluation assessing campaign impact.

Methods: Evaluation methods included service level clinical HCV testing and treatment data for 3 months (6 sites), clients surveys assessing campaign exposure and response (n=112 across 7 sites) and focus groups with staff to assess campaign implementation fidelity and strategies that drove success (n=8 sites).

Results: Clinical data from six implementing sites indicated that 749 people had been tested for HCV, 15/749 (2%) people received a positive RNA result, of whom 13 were referred into treatment. 82% of clients surveyed reported seeing promotional material for the EYC campaign, with most respondents indicating that the campaign made them want to know more about HCV (76%), and made them comfortable talking about HCV (85%). Staff in focus groups identified campaign merchandise as an effective tool to engage clients in conversations about hepatitis C, however, financial incentives were the most effective tool for engaging clients in testing.

Conclusion: The EYC campaign effectively reached clients of ACCHOs with destigmatizing messages. The campaign encouraged clients to engage in conversations about HCV with ACCHO staff, leading to high HCV testing. Despite this, the low proportion of RNA positivity indicates the campaign did not reach those most at-risk and future campaigns should focus on how to reach this group.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: AP have received investigator-initiated research funding from Gilead Sciences and AbbVie and consultant fees from Gilead Sciences for activities unrelated to this work. TC receives honorarium payments from Astra Zeneca Australia for unrelated activities to this work.