It's Your Right 2: Peer leadership in delivery of hepatitis C harm reduction, testing and treatment

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Introduction: It's Your Right 2 (IYR2) was the second iteration of a national hepatitis C virus (HCV) health promotion campaign, co-designed and delivered by peer workers in partnership with AIVL and Burnet Institute. Drug user organisations (DUOs) implemented the 3-month campaign across community and custodial settings, using localised rights-based messaging combined with peer-led engagement, incentives, and merchandise. We present results of the campaign evaluation.

Methods: The mixed methods evaluation included service-level data on interactions, incentives, testing, and treatment; client surveys assessing campaign exposure and response (n=130 across seven DUOs); focus groups with peers who implemented the campaign assessing strategies that drove success (n=8 sites); and paid advertising and social media data on campaign reach. Results were synthesized using the RE-AIM framework to assess reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance.

Key Findings: IYR2 reached an estimated 3,702,672 people via advertising and social media. Of 130 people who completed a client survey, 91% reported seeing the campaign, predominantly in NSPs (71%), with 11% seeing it in prison or community corrections. DUOs reported 3,957 HCV conversations, 1,757 tests, and 1,563 incentives distributed. 454 people received an HCV RNA test (including 55 people recently released from prison and 116 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people), with 63 positive results. Sixty people were linked to treatment. Peers described strong community rapport enhancing credibility, increasing client comfort, reducing fears and challenging misconceptions.

Discussions and Conclusions: Findings highlight the pivotal role of peers in continuing to engage and reach people at risk of HCV with harm reduction, testing and linkage to care. Early findings indicate DUOs are also well placed to reach people who have experienced incarceration.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities: These findings affirm the role of peer leadership and community connections in engaging people who inject drugs into HCV care.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:
No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study. This work was supported by the Australian Centre for Disease Control.