

BARRIERS AND ANABLEERS OF EFFECTIVE CARE PROVISION FOR SEASONAL WORKERS WITH CHRONIC HEPATITS B IN REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

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Background:

In 2008, the Australian Government introduced the Seasonal Worker Program to address the demand for low-skilled labour, primarily in the horticulture industry. This program allows workers from nine Pacific Island nations to work in Australia for up to 9 months at a time. The Pacific region has a high prevalence of Chronic Hepatitis B (CHB), which means that many seasonal workers who come to Australia have CHB and will need to access health care. However, little understanding exists of the experiences of healthcare and service providers in Australia who support seasonal workers living with CHB, and the barriers faced when providing care to this vulnerable population. Therefore, this project aims to better understand the experiences of healthcare and service providers in regional areas providing CHB care for seasonal workers in Australia.

Methods:

This project used qualitative methods, conducting interviews with 20 healthcare and service providers in regional Queensland. The data was collected between November 2023 and February 2024. It was transcribed verbatim, coded in NVivo software, and analysed thematically.

Results:

The first major theme identified was barriers faced by seasonal workers accessing CHB care, including private health insurance, out-of-pocket healthcare costs, limited in-language services, limited health services in regional areas, casual employment conditions, and cultural influences. The second major theme was barriers faced by healthcare and service providers, such as the inability to commence CHB medical treatment due to a lack of access to medication in home countries, a lack of coordinated services, and a lack of resources. The third major theme was enablers of effective healthcare provision for seasonal workers, which were found to be individual and service-based.

Conclusion:

This research highlights the unique challenges faced by seasonal workers with CHB in Australia, highlighting systemic gaps in healthcare access. Addressing these issues is crucial for creating equitable access to CHB health care in Australia.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors have no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest to declare.