

TEST AND TREAT! – A Community Based Viral Hepatitis Screening and Treatment Service in a Sydney Based Needle and Syringe Program (NSP)

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Background/Approach:

A partnership between KRC South NSP (KRC-S) at Sutherland Hospital (TSH) and the SGH Liver Clinic Community Liver Nurse Consultant, was established to provide a community-based viral hepatitis screening and FibroScan® service to clients of KRC-S, with the aim of providing access to Hepatitis C (HCV) treatments within the NSP.

Methods:

Clients self-referred to the widely advertised 'Test and Treat' clinic which offered \$20 vouchers for participating in viral hepatitis screening and liver assessment. Results and treatment decisions were discussed with the Specialist. Clients returned to KRC-S for their results or to start treatment. Clients also completed pre/post-test surveys. Post-treatment follow-up blood tests and results were provided along with a certificate of completion. Clients with bridging fibrosis/cirrhosis are offered follow-up at the SGH Liver Clinic.

Outcome/Results:

The service commenced in April 2017 and has evolved into a monthly clinic in the NSP. To date, 34 clients have been reviewed with 31 screened for viral hepatitis and 34 assessed for liver fibrosis. One client was diagnosed with hepatitis B(3%), 15(48%) clients with hepatitis C and 5 with cirrhosis. 11(73%) people commenced HCV treatment, of whom 10(91%) completed treatment and 1 was lost to follow-up. 34(100%) clients completed surveys.

Overcoming barriers/obstacles

Identified barriers were addressed eg introducing dried blood spot testing for those with poor venous access, offering a pick-up service for clients with access issues, and switching to s100 prescriptions to remove pharmacy co-payment costs. Developing strong collaborative relationships with NSW Pathology and TSH pharmacy further reduced barriers to effectively testing and treating clients.

Conclusions/Applications:

The clinics are growing as word-of-mouth testimonials spread throughout the community of people who inject drugs. The partnership established between the SGH Liver Clinic and KRC-S has provided a viable model for treating clients with a high incidence of HCV within their local community.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *The St George Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, and KRC South are funded by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this study.*