

Comparing Dried Blood Spot and Point of Care testing cascade of care outcomes.

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Background/Approach: How do Dried Blood Spot (DBS) and Point of Care (POC) testing modalities compare regarding the follow up of results, and ensuring minimal loss to the cascade of care for people from vulnerable populations who are not in custodial settings? As part of a 19-day state-wide hepatitis C virus (HCV) campaign in July 2023, Hepatitis NSW peers worked with our clinical partners from ten NSW Local Health Districts (LHDs) to engage with community members and prompt HCV testing.

Analysis/Argument: Testing across 21 locations during the campaign yielded close to 900 community/peer engagements with almost half of those people referred to a nurse. Depending on LHD approach and capacity, HCV testing was either DBS or POC with the total number of tests conducted being 222 and 182 respectively. Following up with campaign partners six months after the campaign to determine HCV prevalence from the testing, and the number of HCV treatments initiated, then completed with a follow up of Sustained Viral Response (SVR) to determine if cure was achieved, provided a community-level snapshot of the cascade of care in action.

Outcome/Results: It was possible, using POC testing in one regional NSW LHD, to identify four HCV-RNA positive people from forty people tested. Those four people were scripted for HCV direct acting antivirals (DAAs) on the day – representing a 10% prevalence and 100% treatment initiation. In follow-up three people had completed their treatment and had obtained their SVR result. This paper will compare the cascade of care outcomes from POC and DBS testing activations from across the campaign engagements.

Conclusions/Applications: Regardless of testing modality, the outcomes demonstrate that care options and/or patient incentives and/or further peer engagement is required for community members with positive HCV-RNA results to ensure there is no loss to follow-up to treatment and SVR.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Hepatitis NSW recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.