

# HEPATITIS C WORK-UP AND TREATMENT: INNOVATION IN CORRECTIONAL NURSING PRACTICE

## Authors:

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## Background/Approach:

In March 2016 the Commonwealth Government made Direct Acting Antivirals (DAA) available to prisoner-patients for the treatment of the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). With no additional resourcing available, SAPHS engaged existing correctional nurses who had an interest in blood borne virus management to screen and work-up prisoner-patients for referral and treatment with DAA's. SAPHS also commenced nurse lead Fibroscan clinics using their own correctional nurses.

## Analysis/Argument:

SAPHS engaged in quarterly video-conferencing (VC) staff education and practice development sessions. These VC sessions have continued throughout the last 20 months to provide information on contemporary practice, new medication or management requirements to ensure consistency of care to prisoners while supporting the correctional nurses with expert advice.

SAPHS correctional nurses have quickly engaged with prisoners either via scheduled visits or opportunistically, such as during medication rounds, to increase screening and treatment of HCV. SAPHS correctional nurses have also been best placed to navigate the Department for Correctional Services security concerns and management of prisoners as they move from one prison to the next. Once the prisoner is work-up SAPHS medical team have been pivotal in prescribing DAA's.

SAPHS correctional nurses coordinate with prisoner's external providers or family to ensure DAA's courses commenced in the community are completed while incarcerated

## Outcome/Results:

There has been a 400% increase in prisoner-patients engaged in treatment of HCV following access to DAA's versus prior Interferon treatment. The familiarity of staff and the opportunistic engagement of prisoners has increased treatment uptake. This process has seen over prisoners 250 prescribed DAA's by SAPHS and countless others worked-up and referred to specialist units.

## Conclusions/Applications:

The utilisation of SAPHS nurses to navigate the correctional environment has resulted in prisoners being accessed in a timely manner. The continued support of correctional nurses is pivotal to the success of HCV treatment in prison.