

Exploring the acceptability of point-of-care hepatitis C testing for people who inject drugs: a qualitative analysis

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Acknowledgements

- Participants in our study for sharing their time and experiences
- The Shepherd Foundation, St Vincent's Hospital Foundation, Gilead Sciences, and Cepheid

Disclosures:

- Burnet staff receive funding support from the National Health and Medical Research Council, Abbvie, GSK and Merck for investigator initiated research.

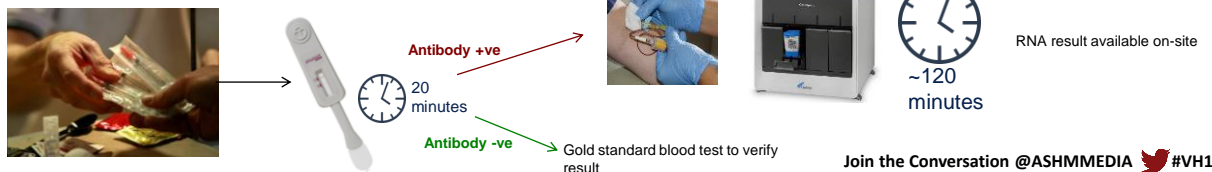
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BACKGROUND/AIM & METHODS:

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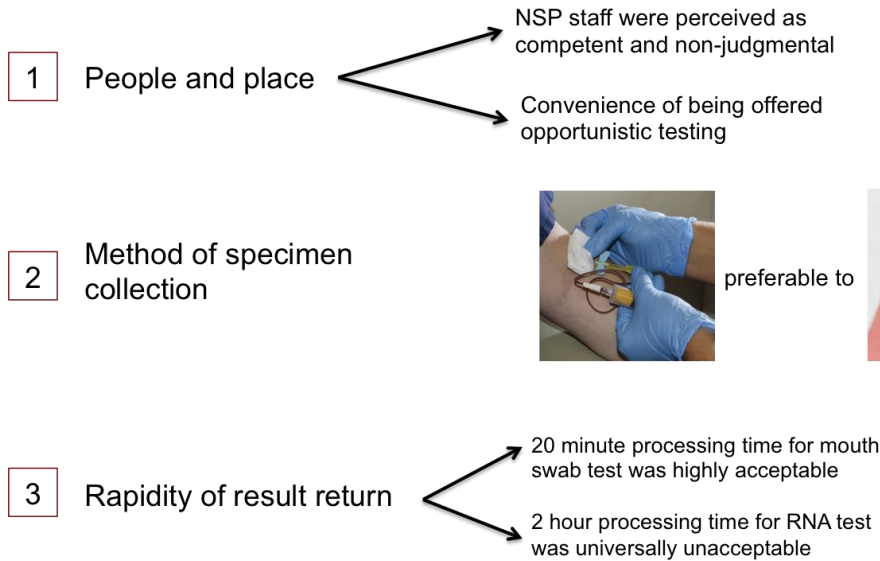
- To improve the health of people who inject drugs (PWID) and achieve hepatitis C elimination, engaging PWID in the cascade of care is essential.
- ~Half of Australian PWID that return a reactive HCV antibody result do not go on to have RNA testing
- **Aim:** To explore, in detail, the factors that shape the acceptability of point-of-care hepatitis C testing for PWID

- Convenience sample of 19 participants who had undergone point-of-care hepatitis C antibody (+/- RNA) testing at two community health services co-located with needle syringe programs (NSPs) as part of the Rapid-EC study
- Semi-structured interview; 30 – 45 minutes in duration. Participants reimbursed AUD20 for their time.
- Hybrid thematic analysis of interview transcripts



RESULTS:

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CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

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- Offering point-of-care (POC) hepatitis C testing at NSPs is highly acceptable to PWID, including when non-medical / nursing staff (i.e. community health workers) are involved
- Less invasive methods of specimen collection for POC RNA testing are not necessarily preferred by some PWID >>>> important that novel models of service delivery still provide adequate choice for PWID
- **Next steps include:**
 - Scale up of Rapid-EC planned for 2018-2019 ~20 community-based health services
 - Rapid POC Testing may be a useful engagement tool
 - Finger-stick blood collection may provide some advantages
 - Rapid POC testing can simplify diagnosis but needs to be balance with other factors i.e. utility of bundled testing

A participant on the role of community health workers in delivering POC testing

"[T]hey don't judge us because we're users... That goes a really long way... because when you go... to see if you have hepatitis C it's already a bit degrading cause it makes you feel a little bit unhealthier than the rest of society. These people don't make you feel that way."

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