2018 AUSTRALASIAN VIRAL HEPATITIS CONFERENCE

Point of care rapid HCV testing of needle exchange clients: Results from a New Zealand pilot study

Geoff Noller PhD¹ Jenny Bourke MHealSc² Chris Frampton PhD³

¹New Zealand Needle Exchange Programme, ²DISC Trust, ³Christchurch Clinical School, University of Otago School of Medicine

Acknowledgements:

The researchers wish to acknowledge the clients and staff of the New Zealand Needle Exchange Programme, particularly those at the Rodger Wright Centre (RWC, Christchurch), the Dunedin Intravenous Oroganisation (DIVO) and the West Coast Mobile Service.

Disclosure:

This project was funded by a grant from Abbvie New Zealand.

BACKGROUND/AIMS & METHODS:

Of approximately 50,000 NZers chronically infected with HCV, only an estimated 10% have accessed treatment

 $\bigstar \geq$ 80% of new infections are amongst people who inject drugs

People who inject drugs are a hard to reach population, often poorly engaged with health care

Study aim: to demonstrate the viability of point of care rapid HCV antibody testing at peer-staffed needle exchanges (NEXs)

Therefore, study our is important because it offers a new path to diagnosis and subsequent treatment for this hard to reach population

Peer staff at two urban and one mobile NEX were trained to administer rapid HCV antibody tests using fingerstick technology, to attending clients

Clients rapid testing HCV antibody +ve were offered confirmatory venepuncture; a questionnaire was also administered

Clients with confirmed viral load and genotype were offered treatment where available and where treatment was unavailable, clients were advised about best health care practice

HCV AB –ve clients were encouraged to return for further testing after 6 months

Appropriate rapid HCV AB tests were identified, i.e. in terms of specificity / sensitivity, ease of use, and cost

Descriptive statistics were used to report collected data

Join the Conversation @ASHMMEDIA 🔰 #VH18

www.hepatitis.org.au

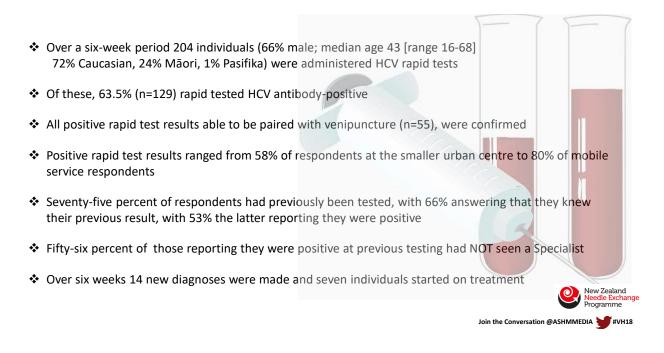


Join the Conversation @ASHMMEDIA 🔰 #VH18



www.hepatitis.org.au

RESULTS:



CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

- Main finding: rapid HCV antibody testing of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations can be efficiently, empathically and inexpensively undertaken by trained non-clinical peer staff at needle exchanges
- Research implications:
 - Our pilot's success has generated important data for better characterising the sero-status of NZ's PWID population, which in turn opens the door to future, more targeted research whose outcomes will benefit injecting clients
 - Researchers partnering with Needle Exchange generates positive outcomes for both parties, including opportunities to upskill NEX staff; in the present case, in-house research increases capacity within the NEP
- Piloting rapid testing with a peer-based, peer-led service increases access to meaningful engagement with health care, particularly where BBVs are concerned. It also facilitates greater engagement with clients by staff and it affords staff the opportunity to increase their skills and knowledge base.
- As a result of this research rapid HCV antibody testing is being incrementally rolled out across the network of NZ exchanges. The NEP has also become the point of contact for other regional health services to access appropriate rapid HCV antibody tests, and to provide advice for best testing practice.



www.hepatitis.org.au

Join the Conversation @ASHMMEDIA 🔰 #VH18