

QuIHN Hep C testing and treatment clinics: Going viral across Queensland

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²The QuIHN Harm Reduction Team comprises of peer and harm reduction staff, and Nurse Practitioners living and working across Queensland from Townsville to South-East Queensland.

Background/Approach:

Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuIHN) is a non-government peak organisation providing harm reduction, therapeutic and GP alcohol and drug services to people who inject drugs in Queensland. Since 2016, QuIHN have run an HCV specialist harm reduction, peer case management, nurse practitioner-led fixed-site and outreach clinics, including incentives, HCV prison linkage (2019), and in 2021 HCV point-of-care testing (POCT), to lead HCV elimination efforts for people who inject drugs (PWID) in Queensland. In 2023, services expanded to targeted regional remote Queensland.

Analysis/Argument:

Provision of harm reduction focussed services by a widely respected interdisciplinary team of peers, harm reduction workers, and Nurse Practitioners is vital to garnering and sustaining client engagement with QuIHN. This, in conjunction with expanding outreach access to regional remote communities, is central to increased reach with priority populations for HCV prevention, testing and treatment.

Outcome/Results:

Expanding access to regional remote along with POCT implementation increased access to testing and treatment. Service data clearly indicates HCV testing numbers increased with the introduction of HCV POCT in 2021:

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Test Numbers	760	656	892	1727	1531	1307

With increased testing rates, HCV detections have decreased to 8.7% at the end of 2024. Annual treatment commencement numbers have remained stable from 2019, averaging 91/year confirming treatment commencement (range 71-125). SVR testing conducted with 65.4% of those treated has resulted in 96.3% of people tested achieving HCV cure. From 2016, the implementation of peer, harm reduction and Nurse Practitioner led strategies demonstrated over 1,000 HCV treatment commencements.

Conclusions/Applications:

QuIHN's multidisciplinary team focusing on the strengths of peer and harm reduction case management, in close collaboration with Nurse Practitioners, providing outreach across multiple communities in Queensland has demonstrated the positive impact of improved access and equity to Hepatitis testing and treatment.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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