

# STIGMA STORIES: SPEAKING UP TO STOP THE SILENT KILLER

Gunn, J.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Hepatitis Victoria*

## **Background/Approach:**

Stigma and discrimination are complex, multifaceted problems that pose ongoing challenges to the prevention, testing, and treatment of viral hepatitis. Stigma is recognised by both the Victorian state and federal governments in their strategic plans as a key priority area for action in achieving elimination. Social media and other digital platforms present an opportunity to give voice those affected by hepatitis-related stigma and discrimination that is both accessible and engaging for the community.

## **Method:**

On Zero Discrimination Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2018, Hepatitis Victoria launched its yearlong anti-stigma campaign through social media, titled '**Stigma Stories**'. Stigma Stories is a 12 part series of short, one-minute videos to be released on a monthly basis. The videos will explore 12 individual experiences of hepatitis-related stigma and discrimination, the consequent impact, and perceptions on how we as a community can address the issue. Ultimately, the objective of the campaign is raise awareness around the issue and challenge stigmatising community, professional, and institutional attitudes towards viral hepatitis. Some videos feature imagery of the 'stop' hand with a voiceover narration, whilst others feature live action footage of the participant telling their story. Consumers are also encouraged to participate in the campaign by using the hashtag #StigmaStops and sharing their views. The videos were independently produced by Hepatitis Victoria staff in the office and surrounding suburb.

## **Results:**

The promotion of Stigma Stories has generated a significant increase of user engagement across Hepatitis Victoria's social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) and encouraged sharing and cross promotion from other stakeholders. It has also allowed and will continue to allow some of our valued supporters and volunteers of the organization to turn their experiences of feeling marginalised into something that can make a positive impact. The videos may also continue to be useful for future campaigns and education sessions.

## **Conclusion:**

This grassroots health promotion intervention is a worthwhile tool in the fight against discrimination and for promoting engagement in the local hepatitis sector.

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