

DEADLY LIVER MOB: ESTABLISHING NEW SERVICES TO ENGAGE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WHO INJECT IN HEPATITIS C AND STI SCREENING

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Background

Deadly Liver Mob (DLM) is an innovative, incentive-based program to promote testing and treatment of Aboriginal people for hepatitis C (HCV) and STIs. The program is run in NSP and/or sexual health services in 9 NSW sites. Clients receive education about the liver, HCV and safer injecting and are offered screening for HCV, other blood borne viruses and STIs. Clients are offered incentives to participate in education, screening, return for results and any treatment required. Clients are also offered incentives for educating and referring their peers to the program. The aim of this study was to explore the decisions to participate and experiences of DLM clients in newly established sites as part of an NHMRC-funded implementation study.

Methods

An Aboriginal researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 clients who had accessed the DLM program within 6 months of launch in the Broken Hill, Dubbo and Coffs Harbour sites.

Results

All participants were supportive of the program and incentives. Location of the DLM site was a key factor in clients' ability to access the program and participants suggested that outreach was needed, even within small communities, as social or cultural barriers may restrict access of some people to the initial DLM location. Participants appreciated the non-technical nature of the education and felt confident in passing on content to their peers. Participants discussed the benefits of encouraging all Aboriginal community members to attend DLM, without directly targeting people with a history of injecting drug use.

Conclusion

These findings can provide DLM sites with strategies to adapt the program while maintaining key principles of the intervention. In particular, these findings suggest that promoting the program to all community members may avoid evoking stigma associated with HCV and injecting drug use, and may access people who may have other risks for HCV.

Disclosure of interest: None to declare