

From Consultation to Action:

Converting a hepatitis B clinical auditing and/or case finding needs assessment into a pilot initiative.

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Background

In 2021, 72.5% of people living with chronic hepatitis B (CHB) were diagnosed, and of those, only 26% were engaged in ongoing care and monitoring¹. These rates were below the targets identified in Australia's Third National Hepatitis B Strategy (2018-2022).

To address this need for strategies to increase diagnosis and care in Australia, ASHM Health conducted a need assessment to assess the feasibility of implementing a national case-finding and clinical audit initiative focusing on hepatitis B (HBV) in primary care within Australia.

This project identified that there was a need, and proposed ways in which a HBV clinical auditing and case-finding project would be most effective in supporting clinicians to increase diagnosis, monitoring, and management of chronic hepatitis B (CHB) in primary care settings.

From these findings, ASHM developed an evidence-based pilot project and framework that was used to effectively advocate for funding. ASHM is now in the process of progressing this pilot project (SEEK B).

Argument

This approach of thorough needs assessment and consultation prior to commencing work demonstrates a commitment to considered and quality work that is supported by consultation, data and process evaluation. When advocating for resourcing, such as funding to complete projects, a formative research approach assists with planning for outcomes to be achieved in the most effective way. This also enabled ASHM to leverage and maximise existing sector knowledge and resources.

The needs assessment included a review of internal ASHM projects, a desk review for of past and current auditing initiatives in primary care and stakeholder consultations in the form of semi-structured interviews and a survey.

The findings from the Needs Assessment: Hepatitis B Case Finding and Clinical Auditing identified a need for a hepatitis B-focused clinical auditing and/or case finding project within the Australian primary care sector. Additional findings indicated that there are challenges and barriers encountered when conducting an audit within primary care and highlighted the need for tailored support with access to standardised processes, and multi-stakeholder engagement.

Patient and community engagement were highlighted as an important part of the auditing process.

Outcomes from the needs assessment included:

- A proposed project design
- A proposed budget and timeline
- A proposed monitoring and evaluation framework

Into Action....SEEK B Pilot Project

ASHM's HBV case finding and clinical auditing project 'SEEK B' has now commenced. The project goal is to increase the number of people identified for screening, testing, linkage to care, and management for HBV in primary care, thereby reducing the prevalence and mortality rates of hepatitis B in Australia. Through a series of four supported quality improvement activities (modules), SEEK – B is intended to work with practices to increase testing of hepatitis B, ensure appropriate linkage to care has occurred and support prevention. Sustainable practice through access to education and support to improve practice data are also project priorities.

A governance group has been convened and resource development is underway. The pilot is intended to run in 2025 with expressions of interest opening later in 2024.

Outcome

The recommendations from the needs assessment formed the basis for SEEK B project planning, that were then refined with learnings from ASHM's National Beyond the C hepatitis C clinical auditing and case-finding program, and input from a governance committee.



Changes made to the direction of the pilot project included:

1. The format and length of the project:

Feedback was that it would be preferable for the project to align with the PIP QI (3 monthly) cycles. SEEK B has been designed as four 3-month activities that can be completed as one-off standalone modules or in full over a year.

2. How the roles within a practice are assigned:

Taking a whole-of-practice approach, enrolled practices will be required to nominate a team to fulfill a series of skills and tasks to be responsible for SEEK B. Rather than allocating specific roles and responsibilities there should be an engaged team who are able to take on tasks as the project progresses. This approach has been suggested in response to feedback that having clear and separate roles has not worked in practice and is often blurry.

3. Approach to incentives

Incentives will be increased in line with Beyond the C to better represent the true time spent by clinics on the project.

Conclusion

This innovative approach, prioritising adequate consultation and planning ensures that challenges, and barriers are able to be anticipated and addressed early in project planning.

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¹ MacLachlan J, Romero N, Purcell I, Cowie B. Viral Hepatitis Mapping Project: National Report 2021. [Internet]. Darlinghurst, NSW, Australia: Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM); 2023.