

# ACCESSING HEPATITIS C TREATMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES: WHERE ARE PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS BEING TREATED?

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## Background

In 2015, 81,000 people were estimated to be chronically infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV) in NSW, the majority of whom had a history of injection drug use. By September 2017, 24% (n=19,700) of people with chronic HCV infection in NSW had initiated direct-acting anti-retroviral (DAA) treatment. The current study aimed to determine i) the proportion of people who inject drugs (PWID) attending needle syringe programs (NSPs) in NSW who reported DAA treatment and ii) the health care settings where treatment was accessed.

## Methods

The NSW NSP Enhanced Data Collection (NNEDC) is conducted annually over a two-week period in all primary and some secondary NSPs throughout NSW. Consenting PWID completed a self-administered questionnaire covering demographic characteristics and injection risk behaviours. In 2018 the NNEDC included questions on HCV status, uptake of HCV treatment and the health care setting where treatment was accessed.

## Results

A total of 2,631 NSP attendees completed the full NNEDC instrument in 2018, with 45% (n=1,184) self-reporting a prior HCV diagnosis. Of these, 20% (n=242) reported spontaneous viral clearance. Of the remaining participants (n=942), 61% (n=571) reported ever receiving HCV treatment, the majority of whom reported DAA treatment (78%, n=447). DAA treatment was accessed from >120 different locations, with treatment primarily accessed through public sector community settings (33%, n=147), tertiary hospitals (19%, n=85), general practices/medical centres (9%, n=41), correctional facilities (6%, n=26) and opioid substitution therapy services (5%, n=22).

## Conclusion

PWID are an important population who require access to new DAA treatments. Monitoring where PWID in NSW are accessing HCV treatment is crucial to guide the allocation of resources at the local level to meet treatment targets and ensure equitable access to treatment for this vulnerable population.

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