

PALEN CREEK PRISON CURES; HCV ELIMINATION IN A WEEKEND

Authors

MIM O'FLYNN¹, MATT YOUNG¹, SAM WHITE², DORRIT GRIMSTRUP³, MICHAEL MOONEY⁴, JOSS O'LOAN¹

¹Kombi Clinic, Queensland, Australia

²Hepatitis Queensland

³QuIHN

⁴QML

Background / Approach

It's clear that more must be done in the Queensland prison system to test, treat and cure HCV. In December 2020 Kombi Clinic along with staff from QuIHN and HepQLD undertook a 3 day testing blitz at Palen Creek Correctional Centre, using Point of Care Testing (PoCT) HCV RNA (Cepheid GeneXpert) and Fibroscan.

Analysis / Argument

The prison population is an often-underserved community especially with HCV testing and cure. Current barriers to care in QLD prisons include access to phlebotomy services (and the time taken to run tests), access to liver assessment (Fibroscan) as well as timely access to treating specialists. This is further complicated as people in prison often move location without notice, making follow up difficult. GeneXpert PoCT simplifies the process of blood collection with a simple fingerstick and the rapid turnaround enables same day results. Bringing all services together in a screening blitz is essential for prison wide HCV elimination.

Outcome / Results

Over 3 days, we conducted 161 GeneXpert HCV RNA tests which represents 98% of the prison population at Palen Creek. 3 patients were HCV positive and started on treatment same day by the Kombi Clinic GPs. We performed 107 Fibroscans, 4 patients had score >9.5. None of HCV positive patients had cirrhosis / HBV / HIV. 34% of the people tested had past / current history of Injecting drugs and 6% of people identified as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander.

Conclusions / Applications

While we had speculated a higher HCV positive rate, this study clearly shows the suitability and willingness for people in prison to have simple fast HCV testing with GeneXpert PoCT. This prison wide testing blitz could be replicated at other prisons throughout Australia to simplify and accelerate getting people on the road to Hep Cure.

Disclosure of interest statement

GeneXpert machines and cartridges were provided free of charge by Gilead Sciences Pty. Ltd. Via a pilot point-of-care testing program.

Dr Young and Dr O'Loan have received honorariums from Gilead Sciences, AbbVie, Merck and Indivior