

HEPATITIS B AND IMMIGRATION IN AUSTRALIA

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Background:

In 2016, an estimated 230,000 Australians were living with chronic hepatitis B (CHB), the majority being people born overseas in endemic countries who are likely to have acquired CHB at birth or in early childhood. Since 2014, clinicians have increasingly reported instances of patients being denied permanent residency due to their CHB status, and have requested guidance as to how to support their patients through this process.

Argument:

Following consultations with clinicians and migration experts, ASHM has developed a simple resource to inform clinicians who have patients with CHB who are applying for permanent residency. Clinicians have a key role in this complex process and can offer significant support to their patients. The resource provides guidance on what information should be provided in a medical report to the Medical officer of the Commonwealth (MOC). As this report must be taken into consideration by the MOC in forming his/her opinion on whether the applicant meets the health and cost criteria set by the Department of Home Affairs. The provision of 'positive' medical reports can help lead to favourable outcomes for patients. The resource also provides information on how the migration system works, and on what grounds people with CHB are likely to be denied permanent residency.

Conclusion:

The resource developed will be presented and the underlying clinical and legal issues explored in this presentation. The information in this resource is essential for clinicians caring for people living with hepatitis B who are applying for residency in Australia. By supporting the clinical workforce in this challenging task, patients living with hepatitis B will have the best chance of being accepted as permanent residents, and to continue to enrich and contribute to the Australian community without further discrimination on the basis of their health status.

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