

ART INSIDE: ENGAGING PRISONERS IN VIRAL HEPATITIS

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Background/Approach:

Art Inside 2017 was a visual arts based viral hepatitis education program for Victorian prisoners. With disease of any sort highly stigmatised in prison, an innovative approach is required to raise awareness and encourage attendance at optional health education sessions.

Analysis/Argument:

Hepatitis C is associated with injecting drug use and sessions focused on hepatitis C invite scrutiny and stigma from both officers and other prisoners and deters attendance. Art Inside shifts the frame of reference from the hepatitis education component to that of an art contest and participation in designing a health resource. Speakers with hepatitis C lived experience delivered art workshops and education sessions. Promotional material emphasised the art workshop component and free art materials for all attendees to maximise attendance and reduce the stigma associated with attendance.

Outcome/Results:

199 prisoners attended eleven sessions at seven prisons in both mainstream and protective custody units. 45 entries were received.

12 entries were selected for use in a resource. The selection panel consisted of community, health promotion staff and funders.

Prisoners developed the resource concept and their artworks will illustrate it for prisoners. It is a notebook with both health promotion messages and blank pages for prisoners to use for art or writing.

Conclusions/Applications:

Key conclusions include:

- Feedback from prisoners highlights the inclusion of an artist with lived experience of hepatitis C. The artist was able to offer insight into translating emotion and memory into illustration. Quality and quantity of entries improved over the previous iterations of the project.
- Offering prisoners items which they value for personal use increases attendance and shows an understanding of their situation
- Being able to avoid discrimination by offering multiple reasons for attendance will increase attendance. Having lived experience speakers and valuing the lived experience of prisoner attendees builds trust and honesty in the group.