

Custodial patients' perspectives of a hepatitis C Virus High Intensity Testing Campaign

Authors:

Cochrane A¹, Kesby N¹, Brown T¹, Wright T¹

¹ Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network (JHNSW)

Background:

The aim is to evaluate the participant experience of a High Intensity Testing Campaign (HITC).

HITC were initiated in custodial settings due to the high prevalence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) among people incarcerated in New South Wales (NSW). Barriers to testing were minimised through HCV point-of-care testing and progressing the care cascade to treatment.

Methods:

A HITC at Mid North Coast Correctional Center resulted in 90% (n=670) of people tested. Of the participants tested 7.3% (n=49) were HCV RNA detected and 83.6% (n=41) commenced treatment within a two-week period.

Nineteen participants were invited to contribute in qualitative interviews regarding their experience with point-of-care testing, education and promotion, stigma, and their suggestions to improve and inform future campaigns.

Results:

Participants found point-of-care testing preferable to venepuncture, pre-education was informative and well received, and future HITC improvements were made. A variety of motivations were identified as reasons for testing. All thought the experience was positive and believed "we got it right."

Conclusion:

This qualitative study highlighted participants willingness to be tested knowing hepatitis C is now curable and treatment is tolerable.

Participants had a positive experience and preferred point-of-care testing due to timeliness of test to result and improving the care cascade to treatment from two to six months to two weeks.

Participants suggested peer engagement groups to improve knowledge and decrease stigmatisation of hepatitis C.

Disclosure of Interest statement:

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