

C the Whole Story Forum connecting clinical and community to achieve hepatitis C elimination

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Background/Approach:

ASHM facilitated a national forum in 2023 to address Hepatitis C care in homelessness, mental health, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) service settings. Building on insights from a similar forum held in 2022, a multidisciplinary steering committee of 15 members—including clinical, community, and lived experience representatives—guided the program. The forum showcased innovative models of care and enabled knowledge exchange across jurisdictions and service sectors. The 6-hour event featured presentations, networking, and shared learning, fostering collaboration and refining approaches to workforce education and integrated care.

Analysis/Argument:

Hepatitis C (HCV) remains a pressing issue among vulnerable populations in Australia, with an estimated 73,980 people living with chronic HCV in 2024. Australia's elimination targets aim to achieve an 80% reduction in new infections and 65% treatment uptake by 2030. Individuals in homelessness, mental health, and AOD settings face compounded barriers to care, with homelessness alone increasing HCV prevalence by up to five times. This forum bridged these sectors, fostering collaboration and identifying innovative care models to drive elimination efforts.

Outcome/Results:

The forum exceeded its registration goal, with 140 registrations (120 confirmed, 20 waitlisted) and 79 attendees, alongside 281 social media engagements and 44 external channel placements. Ninety seven percent of participants rated learning outcomes either mostly or entirely met, equipping participants to address challenges, apply innovative approaches, and reimagine care models for hepatitis C in homelessness, mental health, and AOD settings. Participants highlighted the session's influence on practice, noting plans to adopt innovative patient management strategies, share ideas with colleagues, support local services, explore new initiatives, and enhance collaborative efforts—especially by prioritising peer workers' roles in building trust and delivering care.

Conclusions/Applications:

By uniting sectors that engage vulnerable populations but do not traditionally provide healthcare, the forum showcased the power of cross-sector collaboration. Participants left with practical strategies to improve care, strengthen partnerships, and advance elimination efforts. The event highlighted the potential of integrated, multidisciplinary approaches to overcome barriers and accelerate progress toward HCV elimination.

References available upon request.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

“The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine and the 2025 Conference Collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.