

## **Write to be heard: connecting hepatitis B patients through an in-language lived experience writing competition**

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**Background/ Approach:** Hepatitis B is a lifelong and highly stigmatised disease with more than 70% of the affected population from multicultural backgrounds. In many of these communities there is a lot of misinformation, myths, and misconceptions about hepatitis B. We often hear stories of people who felt shocked, scared, and overwhelmed when they were first diagnosed with hepatitis B, as well as many experiences of stigma and discrimination.

In order to improve the health and wellbeing of people living with hepatitis B, it is essential to increase community awareness and knowledge of hep B, address misinformation, and reduce stigma.

### **Analysis/ Argument:**

Hepatitis NSW held a writing competition aiming to provide people living with or affected by hepatitis B with a platform to tell their stories in the hope of inspiring others to reach out for services and support and collectively help to build a supportive environment for people with hepatitis B. Stories could be submitted in English, Chinese, or Korean.

**Outcome/Results:** 7 stories from Korean and 5 from Chinese community members were received. These stories were then published, both in English and in-language, in the Write to Be Heard resource available both physically and digitally. This initiative gives voice to the real human stories behind hepatitis B, helps to reduce stigma around the virus, and supports people living with hepatitis B to feel heard.

This initiative has also led to some of the authors becoming lived experience speakers as well as forming an ongoing support group.

**Conclusions/Applications:** Write to Be Heard is a novel way to support people through their hep B journey, and to develop support groups for their regular monitoring and wellbeing. In 2025, this initiative will be expanded to other multicultural communities to build on engagement, support and health promotion opportunities to inform development of culturally appropriate hepatitis B programs in the future.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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