

Drug and Alcohol Nurse Practitioner Prescribing Hepatitis C Treatments within NSW Custodial Settings

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Background: From 1 April 2021 Nurse Practitioner's (NPs) were approved to prescribe s100 Direct Acting Antivirals (DAA) for Hepatitis C (HCV). This program is used within Australian custodial settings.

In NSW the majority of DAA NP scripts are written by Hepatology Nurse Practitioners (HNPs) whose scope of practice (SoP) specifically includes the treatment and care of patients with HCV. However, any NP can prescribe DAA treatment to their patients if during their normal SoP assessment of the patient, they are identified as HCV positive.

Argument: Despite a well-developed Hepatology service Justice Health NSW (JHNSW) has an ambitious target to initiate 1250 people on HCV treatment per year. Meeting this target requires an increase and optimisation of our current scripting process and expansion into other existing models of care.

NSW Health Hepatitis C Strategy 2022 – 2025 and the Hepatitis C Testing and Care in Alcohol and Other Drug Services guidance document 2024 identify Alcohol and Other Drug services as key settings for the delivery of HCV services.

The JHNSW Drug and Alcohol (D&A) service includes 5 NPs who regularly assess patients who inject drugs. This presents an opportunity to include HCV assessments and scripting within their SoP.

Outcome: A Pilot program was established to enable the HNP to mentor D&A NPs to expand their skills and incorporate HCV treatment and care into their SoP. This has enabled the D&A team to prescribe DAA's for patients already within the care of their service. The pilot commenced at MRRC, the largest reception prison in NSW, with the first script being written by D&A in March 2023.

Conclusions/Applications: Increasing the number of clinicians prescribing DAA therapy within D&A services will ensure that an increased number of patients can be treated in a timely manner. Thereby improving the continuity of care for patients with multiple co-morbidities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nil disclosure of interest to declare