

Hepatitis B in Regional Victoria - “No Vacancy”

Authors:

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Background/Approach:

Regional Victoria has seen a significant increase in people living with the Blood Borne Virus, Hepatitis B (HBV). This is attributable, to migration from endemic countries and re-settlement in our regional areas. Traditional practices of local health care providers have ranged from automatic referral of all clients with HBV, directly into the regional hospital specialist services, to monitoring of those classified (with the now obsolete-term) as “chronic carriers”; hepatoma surveillance and management of HBV in pregnancy, have tended to be owned by specialist.

One third of all referrals originate from the Community Health sector, where provider issues may include: - knowledge deficits of HBV management; interpreter access limitations, non-bulk billing services; capacity and resource restraints in long term management of chronic disease; difficulty in accessing imaging services particularly elastography; client re-call capability and a perception that HBV, was to be managed by specialists.

Health service issues include: - aging workforce; perceived poor outcomes if discharged back to the community; poor utilisation of other workforce participants i.e., Nurse Practitioners; siloed care.

Analysis/Argument:

The Model of Care proposed:

- 1) Investigates the local Bendigo Community Health Services ability to provide long term, best practice HBV care locally.
- 2) Clients can flow seamlessly between community and speciality services. Stable clients will be slowly discharged, from the specialist clinics, to the community health.
- 3) The Nurse Practitioner will support the community services in skill development.

Outcome/Results:

Flow charts developed – to assist problem solving.

Meetings between Community Health and Specialist services.

Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit will seek Commonwealth funds to research a local and regional approach to HBV health care provision.

Conclusions/Applications:

Start of transfer February/ March 2026

Commonwealth application has been submitted

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nil.