

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING CORRECTIONAL STAFF IN HARM REDUCTION AND BLOOD BORNE VIRUS PREVENTION TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HEPATITIS C ELIMINATION.

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Background:

Up to 50% of people in NSW custodial settings have a history of injecting drug use and evidence shows ongoing Hepatitis C (HCV) transmission. In 2018 the NSW Prisons Harm Reduction Reference Group recommended workforce development for correctional officers on prevention strategies be strengthened. The production of a Harm Reduction Online learning module (OLM) for officers to meaningfully engage with from both a health and security orientated perspective was undertaken.

Description of model of care/intervention/program:

An advisory committee made up of senior Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) and Justice Health NSW representatives oversaw the project. The co-design process was extensive and included community consultation, a co-design workshop, focus interviews and groups, content review and user testing with frontline correctional staff. Videos were also created to be embedded in the OLM with current officers and external experts discussing Harm Reduction in prisons. The OLM was available to all staff and mandatory for all new CSNSW Officers.

Effectiveness:

The OLM went live in October 2023. To date 106 Correctional Officers have completed the training with 73 (69%) completing the post evaluation questionnaire. 100% agreed that they had achieved the learning outcome of the course and that their understanding of the course topics had improved. 98% agreed that they would be able to apply the knowledge and skills learnt and it was relevant to their work. 98% stated they would recommend the course to colleagues. Further results from the evaluation will be presented.

Conclusion and next steps:

The evaluation showed that CSNSW officers were engaged with the OLM, thought it was relevant to their work and they would recommend it to others. The co-design showed that Health and Correctional Services can engage meaningfully around Harm Reduction to create education framed appropriately for officers. Promoting the course and educating more officers will ensure they understand harm reduction and how it is applied which will directly contribute to better patient experiences and outcomes.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nil