

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND HEPATITIS C TREATMENT ARE THE TWO COMPATIBLE? A CASE STUDY OF HEPATITIS C TREATMENT WITHIN A THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY, WHOS (WE HELP OURSELVES)

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Introduction:

Physical and psychological effects of Hepatitis C impact the lives of clients accessing alcohol and drug services. However the severity of past side effects from treatment can deter services from initiating treatment whilst clients participate in residential rehabilitation programs.

In March 2016 new Hepatitis C treatments were made available however due to the severe side effects of previous medications caution as to new treatments being "side effect free" still exists in some drug and alcohol services.

Method:

WHOS Sydney services work in partnership with Royal Prince Alfred providing a Liver Clinic onsite; previously treatment was an option post discharge only.

Acknowledging the introduction of new medications WHOS agreed to consider treatment for current clients.

Therapeutic communities require participation in-group work, job functions and peer support therefore tracking of side effects and program participation was implemented at the time Hepatitis C treatment was made available to clients at WHOS.

To ensure staff and management were well-informed RPAH and Hepatitis NSW provided training on the new medications to gain agreement on the introduction of treatment whilst clients were participating in the TC programs.

Key Findings:

In the 12 months from March 2016, 35 clients commenced on Hepatitis C treatment whilst in program with side effects monitored to ensure participation in the program was not compromised.

Findings outline that the new medications are not side effect free however most reported minor side effects, not interfering with program participation.

Discussion:

Results of side effect monitoring will be presented including client feedback giving confidence to other services considering introducing Hepatitis C treatment.

Implications for Policy or Practice:

Drug and alcohol services have a duty of care to their clients, regardless of philosophy or approach i.e. being an abstinence based service or harm reduction based. For residential services these findings can give confidence that Hepatitis C treatment is compatible with program participation.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

There are no other parties or grants have been involved in this study