

W3 FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND QUALITY OF PEER LED PROGRAMS BY PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN A NATIONAL HEPATITIS C RESPONSE

Brown G¹, Byrne J², Kelsall J³, Perry G⁴,

¹ Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society; La Trobe University, ² Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League, ³ Harm Reduction Victoria, ⁴ Peer Based Harm Reduction Western Australia

Background:

Peer-led responses for people who inject drugs (PWID) must navigate a rapidly changing and highly stigmatised context around drug use. To achieve hepatitis C (HCV) treatment goals among PWID will require major policy and practice shifts, and an even closer partnership with peer led PWID organisations in this changing landscape. However, these peer-led programs often have difficulties in articulating their role, demonstrating their quality and community connection, and showing their effectiveness. This can lead to policy and health services resisting partnership and advice from PWID peer organisations.

Description of model of care/intervention:

This collaborative study aimed to build a deeper understanding of the role, quality and effectiveness of PWID peer programs in HICV prevention and care. We used systems thinking methods to draw together the insights of over 90 peer staff from 10 Australian community and peer organisations. This involved a series of 18 workshops that drew on complex systems theory to elicit and diagram mental models (system maps) of how peer-led programs operate. We analysed the system maps to identify the underlying functions that a peer-led program needs to fulfil to be effective and sustainable in changing community and health service environments.

Effectiveness:

We found four interrelated functions (engagement, alignment, adaptation, and influence) which were key to the effectiveness of PWID peer-led programs. These functions provide a framework to evaluate these programs and their partnership with health services. The paper will describe the implications for PWID peer-led programs in a rapidly changing HCV landscape.

Conclusion:

We need to evaluate peer led programs in the context of the broader system in which they operate. To achieve outcomes for PWID, we need to not only invest in strengthening community systems, but support the health and policy system to identify and draw on quality PWID peer programs and leadership.

Disclosure of Interest

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