

Culture, community, and care: the key principles for connecting with hepatitis B-affected communities

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Background/ Approach:

Australia has signed up to ambitious WHO targets for elimination of hepatitis B by 2030 but is a long way from achieving these goals. As health systems orient themselves from hepatitis C and towards hepatitis B, significant work is required to develop the workforce in working appropriately with affected communities.

Communities affected by hepatitis B often face myriad barriers including language, differing concepts of health, personal, community and societal stigma, difficulty navigating the Australian healthcare system, and misunderstandings around hepatitis B. These barriers lead to lower engagement with the health system and poorer health outcomes and are also often poorly misunderstood by those working in the sector.

Analysis/ Argument:

Since 2016, Hepatitis NSW has worked in partnership and collaboration with communities, community organisations, health, and research bodies to empower communities to engage with hepatitis B healthcare. Hepatitis NSW has delivered 187 outreach engagements with communities including Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, and Filipino and reached over 11,000 members of community.

Outcome/ Results:

Through this work, Hepatitis NSW has developed core principles that underpin working effectively and appropriately with affected communities. This includes the importance of translating documents, the employment of bilingual/ bicultural staff, delivery of outreach in language, the need to meet community in community, understanding cultural concepts of health and the migrant experience, and respecting the diversity of knowledge across communities.

Conclusions/ Applications:

By centring these principles in our work, Hepatitis NSW has achieved significant outcomes, including the rollout of hepatitis B point-of-care testing for migrant communities in NSW, development of translated resources, the employment of 17 dedicated hepatitis B staff, and playing a leading role in the hepatitis B response in NSW. Moving forward, a continued commitment to these principles will be critical in addressing existing barriers, strengthening community engagement, and advancing Australia's progress toward hepatitis B elimination.

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