

## **FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND LIVER HEALTH CHAMPIONS**

### **Authors:**

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### **Background:**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have high rates of chronic hepatitis B (CHB) and liver cancer but engagement in care and treatment uptake remain low. The aim of this project is to increase access to FibroScan® (a non-invasive method for the assessment of liver fibrosis) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. FibroScan® performed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers (ATSIHW) and Practitioners (ATSIHP) may increase trust and engagement at the community level by providing culturally safe care, immediate biofeedback and removing the need to travel which is often a barrier to appropriate care. This pilot study explores the success of a new training course and mentoring program to upskill the ATSIHW and ATSIHP in the use of FibroScan® in Far North Queensland (FNQ) thereby creating Liver Health Champions within communities. This will include how well and how frequently the learned skills are applied, whether the acquired knowledge and confidence are sustained over time and whether this increases access to care. The presentation will cover the progress of the pilot project to date.

### **Methods:**

A new training course was developed and delivered to seven ATSIHW in FNQ. Participant surveys occurred pre- and post-training for evaluation. Each participant is required to perform a minimum of 10 supervised Fibroscans before being deemed competent. Mentoring will be provided through Cairns Sexual Health Service, the Cairns Hospital Liver Clinic, and within the health services. The ATSIHWs will keep a record of performed Fibroscans over a period of time. Data to evaluate the number of Fibroscans, HBV DNA tests and people starting treatment will be obtained from each health service. Participants will also be interviewed about their experience of being a liver health champion in their community.

### **Results:**

Pre- and post-training participant surveys reflect the increase in the course participants' knowledge and confidence across the core competencies of the program.

Further progress and results will be presented as long-term survey report and clinical data become available.

### **Conclusion:**

With the Liver Health Champions project, ATSIHW can perform FibroScan® in a supportive clinical environment. The increase in skills and confidence of community Liver Health Champions over time will translate into an increase in the number of

individuals accessing FibroScan® as well as an increase in hepatitis B testing and treatment uptake following training.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

None of the investigators has reported a conflict of interest.