

“FILLING THE GAPS” - THE EVOLUTION OF A HARM REDUCTION NURSE- AND PEER-LED CLINIC IN NEW ZEALAND

Authors

Higgins L¹, Watson V¹, Rundle K¹, Lines T¹, Eddy K¹

¹ Rodger Wright Community Clinic, Drug Injecting Services Canterbury Trust, Ōtautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand

Background

Established in 2009 and co-located within a needle exchange, the free nurse- and peer-led Rodger Wright Community Clinic (RWCC) in Ōtautahi Christchurch operates from a strong grassroots and harm reduction philosophy. As direct-acting antivirals improved access to hepatitis C (HCV) treatment from 2016, RWCC evolved to provide broader healthcare, enhancing wellbeing for people who inject and use drugs and experience homelessness.

Description of model of care/intervention

Operating via walk-in and outreach, RWCC delivers comprehensive, non-judgmental healthcare. The clinic provides a one-stop shop, including GeneXpert and point-of-care screening, injecting-related injury (IRI) care, street outreach, and onsite treatment of Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI).

Effectiveness

The small team pushes bold innovative ideas to break barriers, reduce stigma, and improve health equity. These include peer-led STBBI screening, nurse-prescribed HCV and STBBI treatment administered in clinic, homeless healthcare outreach, clear STBBI testing and treatment pathways for alcohol and other drug services, HCV mobile medication initiative, improving HCV treatment access for people under specialist mental health, and supporting people onto HCV treatment who are often deemed “too difficult to treat”.

In 2025, RWCC treated 34 people for HCV (including 10 HCV retreatments), performed 60 full STBBI screens, 46 GeneXpert tests, 155 point-of-care tests for HCV, HIV and syphilis, treated 30 people for sexually transmitted infections, provided nurse-prescribed flucloxacillin for 17 IRIs, and delivered 260 health consultations for people experiencing homelessness through our outreach collaboration.

Conclusion and next steps

RWCC provides welcoming, effective healthcare to people underserved by mainstream systems. Our collaborative team combines peer-lived experience with nurse clinical oversight to ensure accessible and flexible healthcare for people who inject and use drugs. These strategies can be applied by empowering nurse- and peer-led teams to deliver innovative care that rebuilds trust in systems that have historically failed many.

Disclosure of Interest

AbbVie New Zealand (AbbVie Ltd) provides funding for selected hepatitis C screening consumables at the Rodger Wright Community Clinic.