

STIGMA STORIES: USING STORY TELLING THROUGH MEDIA TO #STOPSTIGMA

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Background/Approach: Stigma is commonly experienced by many with viral hepatitis and is a major barrier to accessing prevention, testing and treatment. ‘Self-stigma’ is also experienced by some with negative impacts. Raising awareness about and reducing the impact of stigma and discrimination is therefore vital.

Analysis/Argument: Launched on Zero Discrimination Day (1 March) 2018, Hepatitis Victoria ran a year-long campaign called ‘Stigma Stories’ featuring 12 individual experiences of hepatitis-related stigma. The stories are told using a variety of media including video and podcasts for easy sharing on social and digital media platforms.

The objective of the campaign was to raise awareness and challenge stigmatising attitudes towards viral hepatitis through storytelling. Another important goal was to embolden speakers to tell their stories and encourage others.

Outcome/Results: The 12 episodes were listened to or viewed many hundreds of times with thousands of views on Facebook. One story in the series became a major traditional news story reaching a print and online audience of many millions. Stigma Stories generated a significant increase of user engagement across Hepatitis Victoria’s social media platforms and encouraged sharing and cross promotion from other stakeholders.

Sharing stories and insights into the experience of living with viral hepatitis highlights the personal challenge and negative impacts of stigma. The emotive nature of the campaign helped raise awareness of the need to address systemic stigma and discrimination.

In addition, the campaign gave our speakers the opportunity to turn their experiences of self-stigma and marginalisation into something positive, both in their lives and the community.

Conclusions/Applications: Raising awareness of the impacts of stigma and discrimination on people’s health and wellbeing is vital to galvanize change. Storytelling and utilising digital and social media is an innovative way to spread the message, enhance speaker’s self-esteem and improve broader engagement.

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