

CHALLENGING CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS BEYOND VIRAL HEPATITIS ELIMINATION: THE DIVERSITY HUB EXPERIENCE

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Background: Viral hepatitis continues as an important public health concern in Australia. Available data indicate that viral hepatitis remains an important cause of morbidity and mortality in this country, particularly among people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

To engage the diverse population, the Diversity Hub of Sydney Local Health District implemented the African Community Hepatitis B Project, Arabic Hepatitis C Project and “Live Free of Hepatitis C” campaign focussed on development, dissemination and implementation of viral hepatitis information.

Analysis: Providing accessible information is an integral part of our state and national viral hepatitis strategies. The generation of health information resources aims to engage and interact with mainstream health consumers. This process also carries the risk of simultaneously widening the information gap separating specific communities who are already marginalised when accessing health information.

This paper will discuss the cultural assumptions underpinning key health strategies and explores participatory practices to adapt top-down traditional communication approaches to reach marginalised populations.

Outcome The Diversity Hub has implemented several viral hepatitis specific initiatives in 2018, including “Live Free of Hepatitis C” campaign which was the first statewide, multilingual communications campaign to promote hepatitis C cure among culturally and linguistically diverse communities in NSW. The multipronged campaign not only engaged diverse stakeholders in developing customised viral hepatitis messages but also placed diverse communities squarely in the middle of an effort to stimulate increased representation of cultural perspectives on the issue in the print and social media.

Conclusions: The paper demonstrates how it is not only possible to develop inclusive health strategies to reach traditionally underserved populations but also how health practitioners can adapt top down communication approaches to suit the fast changing communication landscape brought about by the internet and social media.

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