

Point-of-care testing for hepatitis C infection in adult Correctional Centres in New South Wales, Australia

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Background

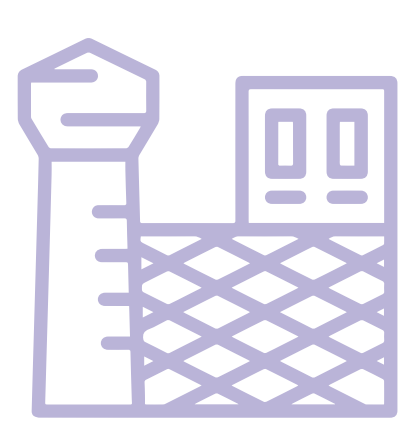
- The high prevalence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) among incarcerated people in New South Wales (NSW) had led to people in custody being identified as a priority setting for HCV elimination.
- Barriers to testing include stigmatisation, patient access, frequent movements, poor venous access, low health literacy, and complex clinical pathways.
- Point-of-care HCV testing is patient focused and mobile, providing an opportunity to overcome barriers to testing.
- We evaluated a model of care to facilitate education, point-of-care HCV testing, and treatment at fixed sites and through a mobile roaming team at Correctional Centres in NSW.

Model of Care

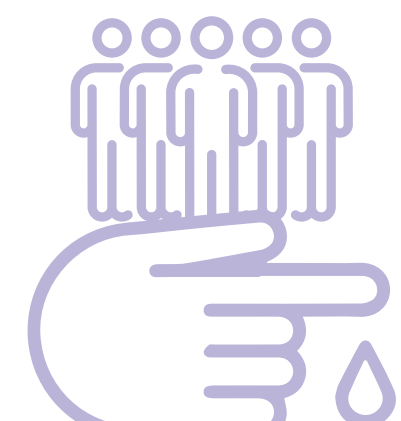
- Point-of-care HCV testing was conducted across 23 Correctional Centres in NSW through an observational study.
- The project was developed in partnership with Justice Health, NSW, and the Kirby Institute.
- The program included accredited training for health staff.
- Participants in custody received fingerstick point-of-care HCV testing (antibody and/or RNA) in accommodation areas, work areas, and onsite health centres at fixed sites or through a roaming nursing team.
- HCV testing, treatment uptake and high-intensity testing campaigns were evaluated.

Effectiveness

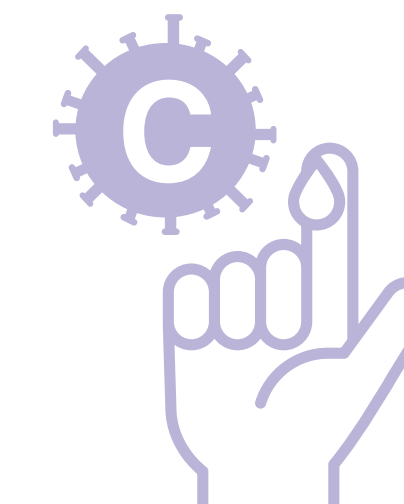
Period: January to December 2023



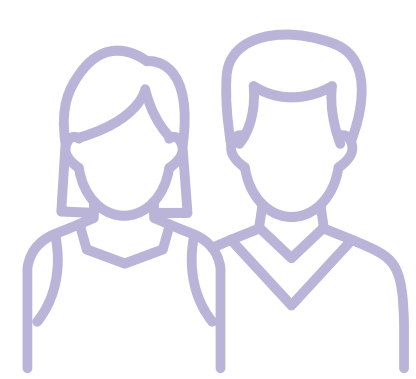
23
adult correctional centres were visited to attend point-of-care testing for HCV



2,267 people
in custody were tested (HCV Ab and/or HCV RNA)



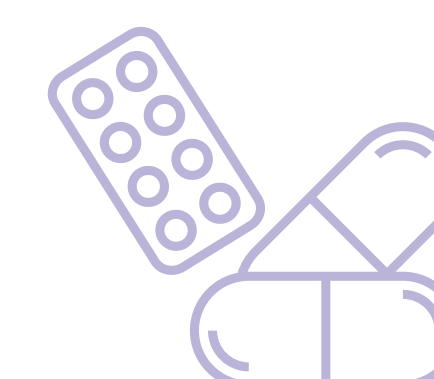
2,431
point-of-care HCV tests performed (HCV Ab n=1,008; HCV RNA n=1,423)



957 people
in custody tested during high-intensity testing campaigns (HITC)



289 (12.7%)
HCV RNA detected participants



226 (78%)
people initiated HCV treatment in custody

Conclusion

Onsite and mobile (roaming) point-of-care testing is a fast and efficient method for identifying people in custody with HCV and facilitates faster linkage to treatment.

HCV point-of-care-testing combined with education can lead to improved identification and a higher HCV treatment uptake.

This novel model of care is an effective way to overcome barriers for a marginalised population who may not otherwise engage in healthcare.