

Action towards Hepatitis C Management in Queensland Prisons: Real insights from the Queensland Prison Forum

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Background

The Queensland Prison Forum funded by Queensland Health and coordinated by ASHM brings together health professionals working in Queensland prisons and those providing in-reach or telehealth services to consider pragmatic approaches that enhance HCV management in the prison environment.

Approach

The full day program attracted 70 participants including Prisoner Health Service staff and Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) Implementation teams, with representation from nursing, executive leadership, public health, policy, health promotion, academia, and government sectors. The forum featured presentations and workshops fostering discussions on key topics, including health disparities among First Nations Queenslanders who accounted for 26% of HCV notifications in 2022, OAT implementation in correctional centres, and harm reduction advocacy. The Queensland Corrective Services Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2020–2025, was presented in addition to the introduction of point-of-care RNA testing across multiple prisons. Each correctional centre and Hospital and Health Service provided updates on their HCV programs, detailing progress and key successes over the past year. Post-event evaluations were conducted to assess participants' knowledge, confidence, and feedback.

Outcome

Post-evaluations showed unanimous agreement on improved knowledge and confidence among participants. All 100% reported improved knowledge and confidence in providing services after attending. Similarly, 100% expressed confidence and anticipated better client outcomes. When asked about including non-health staff in future forums, 89.7% were in favour. Regarding the forum's structure, 92.3% agreed or strongly agreed that the time allocated for presentations was appropriate; 88.46% felt there was adequate opportunity for discussion and participation; and 73.08% were motivated by the speakers to implement new skills or information. Networking was universally recognised as a key benefit.

Conclusion

The forum serves as a crucial platform for knowledge-sharing and strategic planning, addressing real challenges in HCV testing, treatment, and support. Feedback

suggests these areas should remain a priority to enhance healthcare delivery in correctional settings.

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