

## **Hepatitis C point of care testing and treatment in people with serious mental illness: a cohort study of community outpatients (Reach Out)**

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### **Background:**

As WHO hepatitis C elimination goal deadline approaches, new strategies are required to engage key populations who have not yet received hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing and treatment. People living with serious mental illness (SMI) are underserved for preventive care and are a key population for hepatitis C testing. Reach Out investigates if point-of-care INSTI® HCV antibody testing at community mental health services increases testing and treatment among people with SMI.

### **Methods:**

Reach Out is a cross-disciplinary implementation study led by community mental health, infectious diseases, public health, and academic researchers at a single site in Geelong, Victoria, Australia. INSTI® training was provided to community mental health nurses and hepatitis C education to all staff.

The Intervention consisted of a 24-week period of INSTI® testing and a hepatitis C risk factor questionnaire embedded into routine care.

Primary objectives included the proportion of people with SMI that received an HCV antibody test and had a complete hepatitis C diagnosis (antibody negative; or antibody positive and PCR negative or positive) in the 24 weeks pre-intervention, compared to during the intervention, and the prevalence of hepatitis C in community outpatients with SMI. Secondary objectives included the proportion of people with SMI and hepatitis C that commenced treatment pre-intervention, compared to during the intervention and the prevalence of hepatitis C risk factors among people with SMI.

### **Results:**

Recruitment commenced September 2025 for consumers undergoing mental health case management. We look forward to presenting our data (at week 17 of recruitment, N = 25).

### **Conclusion:**

People with SMI may be under-diagnosed. Increased testing will facilitate access to curative treatment. This will move us closer to the goal of hepatitis C elimination. Early indicators support integrating hepatitis C testing within community mental health services. We plan expansion to further sites in the coming months.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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