

Viral Hepatitis and HIV testing in Mental Health Settings – a Partnership Approach

Authors:

Smith S¹, Due, S², McGarry N³, Coutelas J¹, Dowdell L¹, Purchas J¹, Murray C⁴, McNulty A⁵, Cunningham P^{6,7}

¹ HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, ² South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Mental Health Services, ³ St George Hospital Liver Clinic, ⁴ Centre for Population Health, NSW Ministry of Health, ⁵ Sydney Sexual Health Centre, ⁶ NSW State Reference Laboratory for HIV, St Vincent's Hospital, ⁷ St Vincent's Centre for Applied Medical Research, St Vincent's Hospital

Background/Approach: To reach the NSW Health 2028 elimination target for hepatitis C an increase testing and linkage to care is needed. Mental health settings have been identified as a priority setting in NSW HIV and hepatitis C Strategies.

Analysis/Argument: The Mental Health Service, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is working with the HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit to find acceptable and effective ways of embedding BBV testing.

SESLHD has access to a range of testing modalities including Dried Blood Spot (DBS) and Point of Care Testing (POCT). A district wide Blood Borne Virus Testing Policy gives clear direction to clinicians in mental health services on how and when to test. Mental health services have been finding ways to increase access to testing for their clients.

Outcome/Results: A range of initiatives are currently underway in mental health services across SESLHD including:

- Incorporation of BBV testing in Inpatient Admissions Business Rule for all mental health inpatient facilities
- Embedding BBV screening within a routine clozapine clinic at a community health service
- Clients accessing mental health services in their home from outreach workers have DBS available from key clinicians
- Aboriginal Dual Diagnosis workers can offer DBS to their clients on outreach
- As the National POCT program scales up across SESLHD key mental health settings are prioritized for access to testing

Conclusions/Applications: A BBV Testing Policy with clear direction for mental health settings has enhanced partnership and collaboration and created multiple opportunities for mental health clients to access BBV testing.

Availability of a range of modalities enables services to offer testing in novel ways within their existing programs and capacities.

Project results will inform approaches taken by mental health services across SESLHD and NSW with a goal to effectively embed testing and linkage to care.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nil interest to disclose