

Opt-out hepatitis C point-of-care-testing on entry to a large remand prison: a Victorian perspective

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Background: HCV testing and treatment is well-established in Victorian prisons. Novel initiatives such as point-of-care testing programs and opt-out testing on entry to prison have the potential to increase rates of HCV testing, diagnosis and treatment uptake to reach elimination goals. The AusHep study reports national (excluding Victoria) HCV estimates among prisoners for HCV antibody as 31.7% and HCV RNA as 8%¹. This study evaluated the prevalence of HCV infection and treatment uptake among people with current HCV infection following opt-out testing on entry to a reception prison in Victoria, Australia.

Method: An observational study of nurse-led HCV point-of-care testing on entry to a large reception prison was conducted over 12 months in Victoria, Australia. In a collaboration between GEO Healthcare and St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, point-of-care testing was performed by HCV antibody (INSTI) or, if previously diagnosed, HCV RNA (Xpert HCV Viral Load Fingerstick test). Prisoners with a current HCV infection were prescribed DAA treatment.

Results:

	N (%)
Total Receptions	1657 (100%)
Total People Tested	963/1657 (58%)
Median Age	36 years
ATSI	191/963 (20%)
Ever IDU	386/963 (40%)
Ever Dx HCV	214/983 (22%)
Ever treated	163/214 (76%)

Table 1: Demographics and HCV history

- Arrived outside of clinic time
- Recently tested
- Staffing issues
- Mental Health
- Phobia needles/blood
- Not at risk (self report)
- Medically unwell/withdrawal
- Other

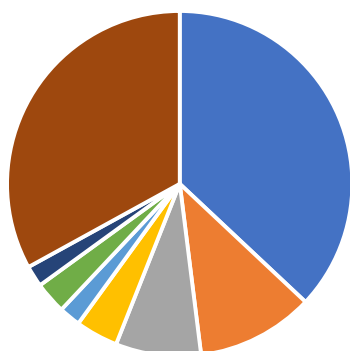


Figure 1: Reasons for non-participation in testing

	ALL	PWID	ATSI
Total HCV Ab tests	439/963	126/386	78/191
- Positive	10 (2%)	9 (7%)	5 (6.4%)
- Negative	429 (98%)	117 (93%)	73 (93.6%)
Total HCV PCR tests	533/963	268/386	117/191
- Positive	19 (4%)	18 (7%)	5 (4%)
- Negative	444 (83%)	213 (79%)	97 (83%)
- Error	70 (13%)	37 (14%)	15 (13%)
HCV Ab prevalence	224/963 (23.2%)*	195/386 (50.7%)*	71/191 (37%)*
HCV PCR prevalence	19/963 (2%)	18/386 (4.6%)	5/191 (2.6%)
Commenced on DAAs	19/19 (100%)	18/18 (100%)	5/5 (100%)

Table 2: Testing results and linkage to care

*HCV Ab prevalence estimate calculated by self-reported prior diagnosis of HCV in addition to HCV Ab positive INSTI test

Conclusion: Opt-out point-of-care testing on entry to prison increased uptake of HCV testing and treatment in a reception prison in Victoria. A low proportion of people with current infection (2%) along with moderate HCV antibody prevalence (22%) which is lower than the AusHep national prevalence estimates (current infection 8% and HCV antibody 32%)¹, suggests considerable progress towards elimination of HCV among people in prisons in Victoria. Further work is needed to understand whether the low prevalence of current HCV infection is observed across other prison settings in Victoria.

¹Prevalence of blood-borne virus infections and uptake of hepatitis C testing and treatment in Australian prisons: the AusHep study

1. Bah, Rugiatu, Lloyd, Andrew et al.

2. The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific, Volume 53, 101240