

## **Active case management to connect hepatitis C notifications to care and treatment in Australia (CONNECT study), a randomised controlled trial**

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**Background:** Despite the simplicity and availability of directly acting antivirals (DAAs), hepatitis C (HCV) treatment uptake in Australia is declining. We measured the impact of using HCV notifications systems to engage diagnosing general practitioners (GPs) and improve patient access to treatment.

**Method:** The CONNECT study was a randomised controlled trial that compared enhanced case management delivered to clinicians notifying new/repeat HCV diagnoses to standard of care in Tasmania (2020-2021). The intervention involved a health department nurse specialist contacting GPs directly and providing stepwise support by telephone, and/or direct patient contact. The primary outcome was the proportion of HCV cases who initiated DAAs within 12 weeks of notification. Secondary outcomes compared proportion completing pre-treatment HCV RNA testing and blood work-up.

**Results:** A total of 171 GPs were enrolled, 85 and 86 in intervention and standard of care arms respectively. GPs in the study arms notified 111 and 115 HCV antibody positive cases respectively. A higher proportion of HCV notifications in the intervention compared to standard of care completed HCV RNA testing (96% vs. 86%;  $p=0.03$ ); and 33% vs. 30% were HCV RNA+ve ( $p=0.19$ ). Pre-treatment workup among RNA+ve was similar between study arms (62% vs. 65%;  $p=0.82$ ). The proportion of all HCV notifications that initiated treatment was similar between study arms (20% vs. 14%;  $p=0.24$ ). The proportion of treatment eligible cases initiating treatment within 12 weeks of notification was similar between study arms (38% vs 32%;  $p=0.63$ ).

**Conclusion:** This is the first prospectively randomised study that explored the utilisation of HCV surveillance data to enhance linkage to HCV treatment. While there was no difference in treatment initiation, the intervention encouraged more GPs to complete RNA testing as the initial stage of assessing DAA eligibility. Health department follow up could potentially augment HCV antibody testing to ensure DAA eligibility is assessed early.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None