

OPPORTUNISTIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH NSPs IN A COMMUNITY SETTING

Kerrie McKenzie¹

¹*Hepatitis ACT*

Background/Approach: With an organisational mission to reduce the personal and social impacts for people who are affected by hepatitis, in 2012 Hepatitis ACT made the decision to use our community service delivery setting to offer a secondary needle and syringe program (NSP) with a goal to increase opportunistic engagement with members of our priority populations.

Through a guerrilla campaign that included quiet advertising, within two months there was a demonstrative increase in walk-in clients to the service. Soon enough, word of mouth replaced our covert A5 flyers. As the NSP grew, so did the diversity of our clients and their related needs.

Analysis/Argument: Clients continue to access our service as we:

- provide a non-judgemental service coupled with long-term engagement;
- provide advocacy and referral;
- have free parking and easy access;
- offer holistic support in other areas for our clients; and
- have a raffle draw at the end of the month to encourage return of used equipment.

Outcome/Results: Since the introduction of the secondary NSP, Hepatitis ACT has significantly more opportunistic engagement around HCV and treatments in a setting that is familiar and comfortable for clients. Additionally, a positive outcome has been the enhancement of existing relationships with priority populations outside of the NSP. Clients who have previously engaged with us in other settings will often come into our service to access the NSP. This continues to provide opportunities to reinforce messaging while simultaneously building relationships.

Conclusions/Applications: Operating a secondary NSP has provided Hepatitis ACT with additional engagement opportunities with people we would not have otherwise met.

The sustained growth of our NSP since its implementation complements existing evidence of how reducing stigma and meeting people where they are at in a safe community setting leads to long-term engagement.

Disclosure of Interest Statement (example): Hepatitis ACT is funded by ACT Health