

Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands: How an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation is working to eliminate Hepatitis C

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The authors begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land, and by thanking the Aboriginal people living with Viral Hepatitis both past and present across Australia. Our fight to achieve Viral Hepatitis Elimination is indebted to you.

Background/Approach: Derbarl Yerrigan Health Services Aboriginal Corporation (DYHSAC) partnered with ASHM to participate in the “Beyond the C” project aimed at identifying, recalling and treating patients with Hepatitis C. More than 200 patients with Hepatitis C were identified through the audit process, and 158 patients were classified as having chronic hepatitis C. Through team work, the creation of new clinical items, active recalls, the appointment of Aboriginal Health practitioners as “hepatitis champions”, and de-stigmatising Hepatitis C, Derbarl Yerrigan successfully recalled all 211 patients to offer treatment.

Analysis/Argument: While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (hereafter referred to as Aboriginal) people account for 2–3% of the population, they constitute 8–10% of all Australians living with chronic hepatitis C (HCV). Evidence suggests significant associations between an intention to undertake hepatitis C treatment and support, community attachment, stable accommodation and stigma. Through identification of affected patients, and providing a culturally appropriate environment for patients to consult with and receive treatment for hepatitis C, Derbarl has successfully demonstrated high uptake of treatment, compliance and cure.

Outcome/Results: 26 organisations across Australia engaged with this project, 54 patients were treated across Australia and 50 patients were treated at Derbarl Yerrigan. Derbarl Yerrigan has completely treated more than 58% patients with chronic hepatitis C, and aims to have all patients identified with hepatitis C treated by 2025 or sooner.

Conclusions/Applications: Derbarl Yerrigan has successfully demonstrated that culturally appropriate primary health care can lead to improved diagnosis, treatment and management of patients living with hepatitis C. Funding to eliminate hepatitis C should be directed towards interventions led by Aboriginal people and supported by Aboriginal communities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

“Derbarl Yerrigan Health services recognises the considerable contribution of the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine in facilitating the “Beyond the C” project. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.”