

HEPATITIS IN PRISONS ELIMINATION (HIPE) PROGRAM, PHASE ONE: OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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Background/Approach: The Network HIPE program involves targeting suitably sized NSW prisons to achieve virtual hepatitis C virus (HCV) elimination. This is undertaken through a process of broad screening, scale-up of treatment, and ongoing review of new admissions. Furthermore, significant health promotion and harm minimisation is delivered to engage patients and help prevent reinfection.

Following the success of virtual elimination in one prison and a subsequent NSW Health Award in 2017, the NSW Minister for Health supported acceleration of the program to target 12 prisons for virtual elimination in 2018/19.

Analysis/Argument: HCV in NSW prisons is significantly more prevalent than in the community. The NSW Hepatitis C Strategy identified people in custody as a priority population. NSW has the largest number of people in custody in Australia.

Outcome/Results: HIPE phase one will have achieved virtual elimination in 12 prisons by June 2019. This includes rural locations where Aboriginal patients form a higher proportion of the population and healthcare provision can be limited. HIPE data has shown that HCV RNA prevalence is lower (10%) compared to previous studies undertaken in NSW prisons (20% - 30%). Furthermore, HIPE is contributing to the Network's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) with NSW Health for patients initiated on HCV treatment. Incidental clinical findings have further highlighting the benefits of a broad screening approach and detecting conditions which may not otherwise have been identified.

Conclusions/Applications: The Network HIPE program is the largest program of its kind in Australia and has garnered significant internal and external interest regarding replicability. The completion of HIPE in 12 prisons has resulted in many lessons learned including the importance of consultation, planning a thorough maintenance plan, and patient engagement. Planning for HIPE phase two is currently underway with the ambitious goal to support the NSW Strategy of HCV elimination by 2028.

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