

## **Facilitating linkage to treatment through the NSW Hepatitis C Remote Prescribing Program**

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**Background/Approach:** This paper examines the 2022 NSW Hepatitis C Remote Prescribing Program outcomes and demonstrates how the program has facilitated linkage to hepatitis C treatment through several case studies.

**Analysis/Argument:** In 2022, the program's model of care continued to be utilised to provide flexible, patient-centred service delivery in a variety of settings in areas with limited access to HCV treatment. Effective exchange of information between nurses performing HCV assessment and remote prescribers enabled efficient and timely access to treatment.

**Outcome/Results:** In 2022, a total of 58 patients, including 18 who identified as First Nations people, were referred by 12 nurse referrers and initiated on hepatitis C treatment by 3 remote prescribers. Patient referrals included 3 from Aboriginal Medical Services; 10 from Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) services; 8 from General Practice, 24 from homelessness settings; 2 from Mental Health settings, and 4 from Liver Clinics.

Case presentations feature Frank, a 53yo First Nations male linked with AOD whose re-infection was identified through dried blood spot testing; and Daryl, a 46yo Caucasian male with unstable housing who required re-scripting to replace lost medications in the Lismore floods. Both men needed additional support following testing to complete their treatment course.

The experiences of Kevin, a 31yo First Nations male who was homeless following release from custody 4 days prior; and Jamie, a 41yo male who had been homeless for many years, are also discussed. Both men were supported by the Health on The Streets team throughout their treatment, including ongoing harm reduction strategies and routine contact.

**Conclusions/Applications:** The case presentations demonstrate how nurses participating in the program provided intensive on-treatment support, harm minimisation education and individualised follow-up to help these patients overcome their challenges and be cured of hepatitis C. The overall 2022 program outcomes showed that traditionally hard-to-reach populations can be successfully treated with added encouragement and support.

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