

Flipping the narrative - finding opportunities to engage and educate people in prison around hepatitis b and c during covid-19 lockdowns

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Background/Approach: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Queensland Correctional Centres were placed in various stages of restrictions. To limit the risk of a person with COVID-19 being received into a prison, people entering the correctional system were subjected to isolation for 14 days. If a person in prison was isolated, they were not permitted out of cell time, or to be near other people in prison. People in isolation were allowed access to activities such as books, drawing and letter writing.

Analysis/Argument: Queensland Correctional Centres reached out to Hepatitis Queensland to request additional resources that they could provide to people in insolation. Due to limited movements, all external visitors were also prohibited during the height of the pandemic. In response to this need, HQ applied for a COVID-19 grant to produce a 20-page Activity Book titled 'Boredom Busters'. The resource provided people in prison with the opportunity to learn about viral hepatitis, including prevention and the long-term health outcomes of being cured of hepatitis C, tips on exercise and better mental health strategies as well as mindful colouring-in pages.

Outcome/Results: Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Custodial, Queensland Corrective Services provided state-wide approval for the distribution of 5000 copies of the Activity Book disseminated across to 13 correctional centres in Queensland. Feedback has been positive and well received across all stakeholders and further request for reprints have been made.

Conclusions/Applications: Lockdowns and restricted visitation rights in prisons in response to COVID-19 has the potential to significantly impact the wellbeing of people in prison. Maintaining opportunities to connect while finding new avenues of communication is important especially in the delivery of health information and messaging. The Boredom Buster is one example of a resource that provides multiple benefits from increasing knowledge to providing people in prison with mindfulness activities to do while in isolation.

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