

# **A LEAP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION- DEBUNKING MYTHS, SOLIDIFYING ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMING HEALTH ATTITUDES WITHIN CANBERRA'S MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS.**

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**Background/Approach:** The prevalence of hepatitis B in the nation's capital, Canberra, is approximately 4000. The diversity of the multicultural population and variation in diagnosis and treatment rates, owing to health attitudes and differing levels of health literacy presents as a challenge for a small community-based organisation. This case study examines how a community-based approach has proven to be a success when working in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) settings.

**Analysis/Argument:** Owing to the stigma and varying levels of health attitudes surrounding hepatitis in the CALD communities, participation at general events from these communities is limited. Building a rapport and ensuring longevity of education and awareness was established by utilising innovative ideas for engagement. This case study will highlight how this integrated model of education and care has produced favourable results beyond the usual challenges.

**Outcome/Results:** A variety of factors such as age, gender, cultural/religious beliefs, language and health literacy were evaluated during the planning and design phases of every engagement strategy. Debunking myths, reducing stigma, creating awareness and improving health attitudes were key themes consistent throughout each engagement. A multifaceted engagement approach involved use of mass media (radio shows, designing short films); innovative utilisation of technology (mobile apps, social media platforms); interfaith partnerships (churches, temples, mosques); induction events at embassies for new arrivals; collaborating events with local community organisations and strengthening the taskforce through regular workforce training. Positive feedback, re-invitation to community and embassy events, and increased testing numbers through the organisations outreach-testing partnerships are some of the outstanding results of this innovative approach.

**Conclusions/Applications:** This community-based approach by Hepatitis ACT has been instrumental in establishing ongoing community partnerships with CALD communities in the ACT. This has resulted in a positive increase in health attitudes, an increase in understanding and a reduction of hepatitis B stigma in multicultural communities.

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