

Social Media Underpinning Digital Pathways to Hep C Elimination

Authors:

Wilkinson, S¹

¹Hepatitis NSW

Background/Approach: The HepConnect hep C treatment support program in partnership with the Perx Health app reached out to hep C patients through social media during Covid-19 pandemic promoting self-determination through a client self-enrolment link.

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted referrals from clinicians and new patients were predominantly acquired from direct-to-consumer marketing channel Facebook. Surmounting common barriers responsible for lack of DAA uptake, HepConnect and the Perx digital technology self-management app supported client's hep C treatment journey through daily reminders and incentives including rewards and voucher for task completed, where they otherwise would have been lost to follow-up or slow to initiate treatment.

Analysis/Argument: The Perx Health app self-enrolment link eliminated influencing physical factors like patient's geography, healthcare workers' and services declining numbers in rural and remote areas resulting in lack of clinical follow-up, stigma and discrimination experienced by people who inject drugs and waiting periods / missed specialist appointments if referred onwards.

Outcome/Results: During this time the Perx app has engaged 26 people to start DAAs, 17 are current clients and 11 people have completed treatment. August to October the average engagement time per client per week was 47 minutes and 1,290 games were played during these three months.

In October 2021 four Facebook ads on the Hepatitis NSW Facebook page resulted in 195 clicks reaching 19,643 people with 16,178 in NSW with 253 post engagements of which 63% identified as women and 37% as men.

Conclusions/Applications: Since its launch in April 2021 the Perx Health app through the Facebook ads' self-enrolment has improved hep C patients' health seeking behaviour promoting their autonomy and motivating their self-determination to actively engage in their healthcare.

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