

## **POINT-OF-CARE TESTING FOR HEPATITIS C INFECTION IN ADULT CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA**

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### **Background:**

Given the high hepatitis C virus (HCV) prevalence and incidence among people in prison, Correctional Centres are a key setting for HCV elimination. Barriers to care include frequent movements of people in prison and complex clinical pathways. Point-of-care HCV testing is patient-focused, mobile, and portable, providing an opportunity to overcome these barriers. We evaluated a model of care consisting of the delivery of point-of-care testing (including mobile testing) to enhance delivery of HCV testing and treatment in adult Correctional Centres.

### **Description of model of care/intervention:**

HCV point-of-care testing was conducted at 23 Correctional Centres (seven fixed sites and one mobile outreach) in New South Wales, Australia. The project was developed in partnership with Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, New South Wales Health, and the Kirby Institute. The program includes operator training for health staff and a quality assurance framework. Participants received on-site point-of-care HCV RNA testing (Xpert HCV Viral Load Fingerstick test) in accommodation areas and medical clinics. As part of an observational study, this study evaluated HCV testing and treatment.

### **Effectiveness:**

Between 13 July 2023 and 1 March 2023, 939 people received point-of-care RNA testing. The HCV RNA prevalence was 8% (74 of 939). Overall, 88% (65 of 74) have initiated treatment. Targeted onsite testing has been a fast and efficient method for identifying people with current HCV to facilitate linkage to treatment. Increased educational opportunities, increased participant engagement, and rapport building with health and Correctional staff have been additional advantages.

### **Conclusion and next steps:**

Point-of-care testing has led to high testing and treatment uptake in adult custodial settings. Targeting people at HCV risk can lead to earlier identification of infection or reinfection, earlier treatment intervention, and enhanced cure determination. Innovative interventions are necessary to enhance initial testing and re-testing and introduce care pathways to enhance treatment to facilitate HCV elimination.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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