

## **Getting pricked for Hep C: Piloting Dried Blood Spot testing within an Aboriginal Healthy Lifestyle Program in South Eastern Sydney**

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**Background:** The NSW Health Dried Blood Spot (DBS) project aims to increase hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing amongst Aboriginal people. A pilot project was established in partnership with an Aboriginal healthy lifestyle program in South Eastern Sydney to determine the acceptability and feasibility of DBS with the Aboriginal community and inform future Aboriginal health programs and activities which aim to improve access to testing and cures for HCV in NSW.

### **Methods:**

- HCV training was provided to Bulbuwil health workers to build their capacity
- Aboriginal identified health promotion staff attended Bulbuwil walking group and provided basic HCV education and offered DBS testing
- Focus centered around holistic liver health, rather than risk behaviors to uphold cultural appropriateness with older program participants
- Culturally appropriate HCV resources developed and distributed with “I Keep the Mob safe” and “Hep C is Curable” slogans
- Post-test survey completed to understand experiences with DBS
- Testing and linkage to care was incentivised

### **Results:**

- 13 tests with 12 negative results. One insufficient sample
- 92% (n=12) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- 7 males and 6 females
- 3 participants under 44 and 10 aged 45 and over
- 77% (n=10) had first HCV test
- 85% (n=11) appreciated Aboriginal identified staff
- 100% (n=11) would recommend DBS testing to a friend

**Conclusion:** Outcomes from the pilot confirm that DBS was acceptable to the community with high testing uptake and willingness to recommend DBS testing to a friend. The number of first time testers indicates success reaching a previously untested community. Critical to this success was the partnership between Aboriginal identified health promotion staff and trusted Aboriginal Bulbuwil workers providing testing and information in a culturally safe and appropriate setting. The pilot supports the scale up of DBS testing amongst Aboriginal communities and providing testing in a culturally safe setting, with trusted workers and within existing healthy lifestyle programs.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None