

# **HEP CURED: A Co-designed Health Promotion Partnership Program and Strategic Messaging Campaign To Increase Hepatitis C Treatment Access For People Who Inject Drugs**

## **Authors:**

Drew S<sup>1</sup>, Pollett V<sup>1</sup>, Leadbeatter K<sup>1</sup>, McMahon M<sup>1</sup>, Murray C, Prain B<sup>2</sup>, Henderson C<sup>3</sup>, Pepolim L<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hepatitis NSW; <sup>2</sup>NSW Ministry of Health, <sup>3</sup>NSW Users and AIDS Association

**Background/Approach:** People who inject drugs (PWID) are a priority population within state and national hepatitis C strategies. Programs are needed to increase access to hepatitis C information, testing and treatment for this important population. PWID require support, and messages must overcome stigma and discrimination as a barrier.

A co-designed health promotion partnership program and communications campaign named HEP CURED, was developed between Hepatitis NSW, NSW Ministry of Health and NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA)

**Analysis/Argument:** The HEP CURED messaging was developed through research with PWID focus groups sharing their motivators to seeking health services. Messaging and images were then developed for audience feedback, resulting in a campaign that spoke to the motivators, delivered positive messaging about treatment. The campaign images, about connection, evaluated as meaningful and resonant.

The call to action “Talk to us now” aimed to start conversations. A partnership program provided peer workers to talk with PWID about treatment, while clinical staff offered testing and treatment, removing practical barriers to accessing services.

Peer workers:

- built trust
- started conversations
- provided current information
- created a bridge into clinical services
- distributed merchandise as an engagement tool

**Outcome/Results:** The campaign advertising was placed inside and around 82 Needle and Syringe Services (NSPs) across NSW, with 37 offering the peer worker and clinical services partnership program.

Peer workers delivered 55 site visits. 742 people were engaged and 280 took the first step to test.

An independent evaluation, including surveys and interviews with PWID reported

- 64% found the imagery appealing
- 72% motivational drivers resonated
- 68% talked to someone about testing and treatment.

## **Conclusions/Applications:**

Despite COVID restrictions, the campaign

- increased access to testing and treatment
- created linkages to care
- was well received
- popular with services staff

- positive, uplifting messages

The campaign achieved enhanced engagement and reach with PWID audiences, and brought some PWID into the health corridor for the first time.

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