

COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL OF CARE FOR HEPATITIS C TREATMENT

Background

Hepatitis C (HCV) treatment uptake with Direct Acting Antivirals (DAA's) has decreased in Australia in the last 2 years. It is estimated that over 43,000 Victorians are still living with chronic HCV¹ despite attempts at increasing consumer awareness and promoting screening of at-risk populations.

We identified gaps in the provision of treatment in regional areas, and significant barriers in accessing care due to distance constraints and lack of necessary experience by primary care providers.



Outreach Clinic

A remote treatment clinic in the Victorian town of Wallan was established, 53km north from Austin Health. With a population of over 11,000 residents (Census, 2016)², it is located within the Mitchell Shire Council and Murry PHN. The Hepatitis C Mapping Report 2016³ was reviewed indicating treatment uptake was low despite high notification rates.

The HCV clinic is co-located with Nexus Primary Health SuperClinic, a primary care centre with on-site GP's, opioid substitute therapy prescribing clinicians and Mental Health and Wellbeing unit.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the staff at Nexus Primary Health in Wallan for embracing our vision and seeing the benefits of a 'one-stop shop' for patients seeking HCV treatment, also thank you to our patients for their valuable feedback to our survey which proves the model is successful and meets community expectations.

Model of Care

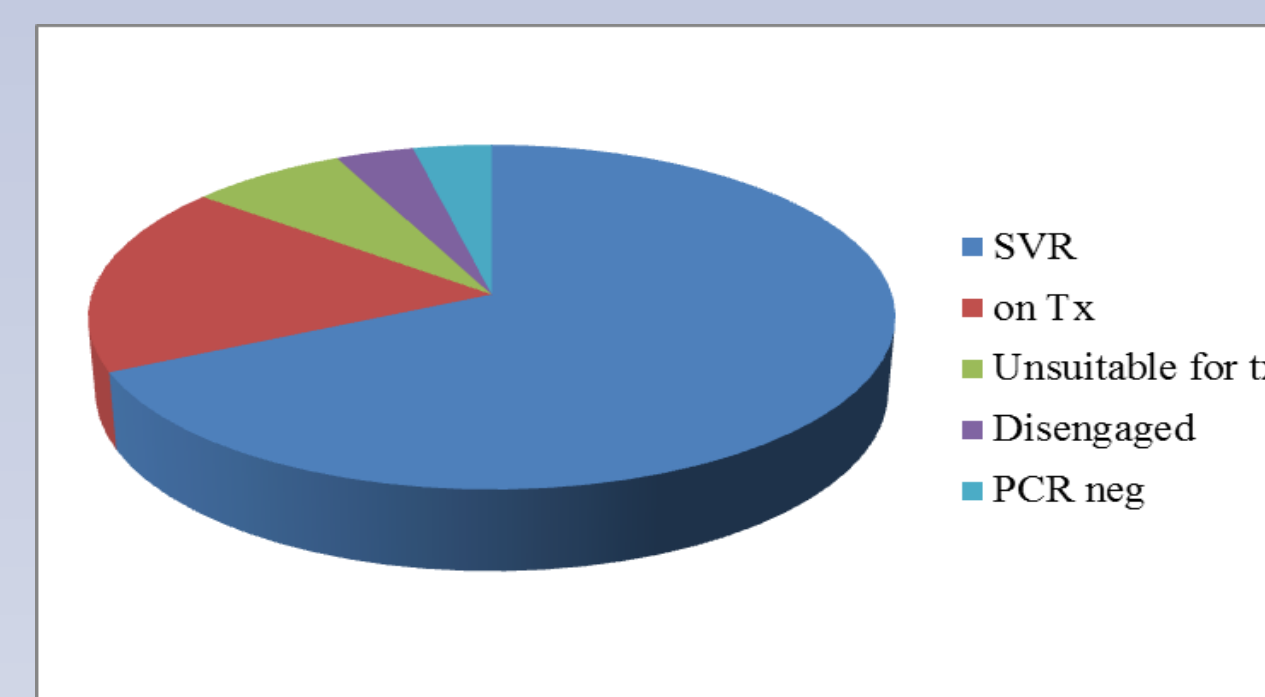


To increase awareness and understanding of HCV for primary care providers in the local area, education sessions and information on the clinic was provided to the healthcare community.

A monthly session was commenced in July 2018 run by a Gastroenterologist, a Hepatitis C Clinical Nurse Consultant and a Clinical Pharmacist. A portable fibrosan machine accompanies the team with pathology services on site.

Results

28 new patient referrals were received for the HCV Outreach clinic in Wallan. Of these, 24 have commenced DAA treatment, with 19 achieving SVR and 5 yet to complete (100% SVR). 2 patients were unsuitable for DAA treatment, with one patient disengaging. Our overall FTA rate was 29%.



Patient feedback

Anonymous patient satisfaction surveys were sent to all patients who were initiated on HCV treatment. Survey items assessed patient demographics (sex and age) and satisfaction with a community-based clinic, level of engagement, experiences of discrimination and stigma, and easily accessible. Satisfaction was assessed on a scale (1 = not important, 3 = somewhat important, 5 = very important) and with open ended questions.

12 patients completed the survey (50%) with 42% males and 58% females. 75% of respondents were aged between 46-60 with 25% aged over 60. 83% of respondents stated a community-based Hepatitis C clinic is very important to them and the clinic was very easy to access. 11 stated that the clinic was engaging and caring, and all felt they were treated respectfully without discrimination (100%). Some examples of patient comments listed below:

- ".....a community based Hepatitis C clinic will allow people to access the treatment a lot easier"
- ".....very easy to talk to, they were caring"
- ".....I have been made to feel like a friend rather than a person with a stigma"
- ".....they were very helpful and I would highly recommend them for anyone seeking treatment"
- ".....I rang another clinic and waited, to no avail"
- ".....extremely caring and interested in your health and reaching a positive outcome"
- ".....very engaging, caring and always available"
- ".....Wallan clinic is a lot easier to travel to than Austin Hospital"
- ".....I would recommend it highly. I couldn't believe how easy it was"
- ".....I felt like I was being 'hand-balled' to different doctors until I was finally referred to Austin Health"

References

1. The Kirby Institute: https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/report/Monitoring-hep-C-treatment-uptake-in-Australia_Iss7-JUL17.pdf
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics: https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC22648
3. 2016 First National Hepatitis C Mapping Report <https://www.ashm.org.au/products/product/HepC-Mapping-Report-2016>

Pharmacy

Clinical Pharmacists play an important role in the management of patients undergoing HCV treatment. All 24 patients (100%) were provided with counselling by the Clinical Pharmacist on the day of review. 10 patients (41%) required drug changes to ensure medication efficacy of the HCV treatment, and 5 patients (20%) were organised with a dosage administration aid (dosette or Webster pack).

All patients were provided with printed information on the prescribed HCV medication, with contact details of both the Clinical Pharmacist and the HCV CNC. A follow up phone call by the HCV CNC within 3 weeks also ensured patient compliance and to assess and manage any reported side effects.



Conclusion

A community-based HCV clinic has been well received by healthcare professionals and patients alike. 28 referrals have been received, with 24 commencing DAA treatment, and to date 19 have achieved SVR with 5 yet to complete treatment (100% SVR).

Contact details

Austin Health - Hepatitis C Rapid Access to Treatment

Clinic Locations:

Austin Health, Banyule Community Health, Nexus Primary Health and Kyneton District Health, with nurse led clinics at Uniting ReGen Curran Place and NEAMHS (Austin Mental Health outpatient department)

P: 0481 909 741

E: livernurses@austin.org.au

W: www.austin.org.au/HepC

