

## **ACCESSING THE INACCESSIBLE: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO HEPATITIS C TESTING AND TREATMENT IN THE COMMUNITY**

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**Background:** It is estimated 160,000 people are chronically infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) in England. Injecting drug use continues to be the biggest risk factor. In Hampshire, patients reported being stigmatised, discriminated against, and fearful of treatment. Hep C Hants P2P is a peer led service set up to empower and support people at risk to be tested and treated. The innovative factor is that the team all have lived HCV experience bringing credibility to their interventions.

Andover is a rural town with poor transport links which is a key barrier for accessing HCV treatment. Testing numbers were low coupled with lack of motivation for change. This project sought to bring hepatology care into that community with a dedicated blood borne virus (BBV) champion on site.

**Description of model of care/intervention:** The model of care is a peer led hepatology outreach clinic within the drug service with specialist BBV champions to discuss HCV every time patients present to kept motivation and momentum high.

**Effectiveness:** Prior to the project, 24 individuals had a HCV diagnosis. Through rigorous testing a further 28 patients were identified. 43 patients have accessed outreach clinics to date. 15 have been treated, 4 identified as having spontaneously cleared HCV. 21 will be treated in the next few months.

**Conclusion and next steps:** Peer to peer education and support combined with specialist outreach clinics is a highly effective community-based model. This integrated method increased engagement delivering a higher proportion of patients with HCV into care pathways. Treatment numbers have only been hindered by NHS run rates. Our peer led model can be easily replicated to achieve microelimination. It has been so successful that our ODN are still supporting the project without direct funding.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** This project was started with a Gilead UK Fellowship grant