

NON-CLINICAL SERVICE PROVISION OF HIV AND HEPATITIS C DRIED BLOOD SPOT TESTING IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

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Background:

Dried Blood Spot (DBS) is a free and confidential finger prick test for Hepatitis C (HCV) and HIV; often preferred to serology for those with poor venous access. This program is offered by Ministry of Health, St Vincent's Hospital and Sexual Health InfoLink.

Previously, DBS testing was only offered by clinical services in Sydney Local Health District (SLHD). Barriers were identified to DBS uptake including requirement for Medicare eligibility and clinical documentation of the encounter within the Electronic Medical Record (eMR).

Description of model of care/intervention:

In April 2020, SLHD HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, a non-clinical service, became an independent DBS site, aiming to address these barriers.

In collaboration with Gastro and Liver and Sexual Health Services, comprehensive protocols were developed to support testing for Medicare ineligible clients, guide result provision, support referral pathways for confirmation serology and HCV treatment initiation. Health Promotion Officers (HPOs) were trained to conduct all DBS project steps, including testing. A SLHD Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) system was established to store client results securely.

Effectiveness:

This model of care allowed for DBS to be delivered in a range of SLHD community settings, including Community Housing and Social Services.

At ten community events, 99 high-risk individuals were engaged, with high representation of people who inject drugs. 78 were tested among whom 47% (N = 37) were unable to provide Medicare details. HPOs provided 74 negative results by phone call or text.

Four HCV cases were identified and referred to Gastro and Liver service, the four completed confirmatory serology and two commenced treatment.

Conclusion and next steps:

It is viable for non-clinical settings to become an independent DBS site, with appropriate training, governance and support of clinical partners.

This outreach model will be expanded to other settings including homelessness services and pharmacies.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

All authors declare they do not have any conflict of interest.

