

## HEPATITIS C EDUCATION FOR NSP FRONTLINE WORKERS: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

Dawson O<sup>1</sup>, Runk L<sup>1</sup>, Day E<sup>1</sup>, Habraken N<sup>1</sup>, Jose H<sup>1</sup>, and Grebely J<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine, Sydney

<sup>2</sup> The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, Sydney

**Background:** Given the large prevalence of hepatitis C (HCV) among people who inject drugs, Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) are important avenues for expanding HCV care and for supporting a constructive environment to begin the HCV conversation. The aim of this study was to evaluate the preliminary changes in self confidence among NSP frontline workers participating in an HCV education program.

**Methods:** The Hepatitis C for NSP Frontline Worker Education Program (“the Program”) was developed by the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine in collaboration with the Kirby Institute, UNSW, and under the guidance of an expert advisory group. The Program consists of online learning modules and a 2.5-hour interactive face-face workshop. Participants self-reported changes in confidence through surveys administered pre-course and immediately post-course. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure confidence in 6 core competencies (score >3 out of 5 related to confidence in each competency).

**Outcomes/Results:** A total of 152 individuals attended the 12 face-face workshops between November 2018 and March 2019. Among participants who completed pre- and post-workshop surveys (n=74 and 89, respectively), there was a clear increase in the proportion of people who reported > average confidence with respect to client engagement, (44% vs. 85%, pre to post course), transmission prevention education (38% vs. 83%), explanation of HCV testing and liver disease assessment (27% vs. 80%), advising patients about new HCV therapies (30% vs. 82%), ongoing adherence support (34% vs. 74%) and referring to appropriate services (56% vs. 86%).

**Conclusion:** Self-reported confidence related to providing HCV education in the NSP improved immediately following the delivery of the Program. Further evaluation, including a 3-month follow-up survey, will help determine sustained confidence and practice changes.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. The development and delivery of the education program evaluated in this work was funded by Gilead Sciences.