

Deadly Liver Mob Project

A peer driven project to reduce hepatitis C in the Aboriginal Community

Description

Deadly Liver Mob (DLM) is a multidisciplinary hepatitis C education and screening project being led by the Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) in partnership with Sexual Health (SH).

While Aboriginal people are over represented in hepatitis C data, they are underrepresented in screening and treatment settings. The association of the virus with drug injecting and prison life, add to the shame and stigma surrounding hepatitis C.

The **DLM** project originated in Mt Druitt while the NSP was still operating under Sydney West Area Health Service. A second project site was established at South Court Primary Care Centre in February 2015.

DLM is run by an Aboriginal Peer Worker with the support of the NSP team. It offers small incentive payments at each stage of participation. Initially clients engage in an educational yarn-up, with 5 key messages about Hep C:

- (1) What is it?
- (2) How do you get it?
- (3) How do you prevent it?
- (4) How do you live with it?
- (5) How do you treat it?

They are encouraged to share their learning with up to three Aboriginal mates, returning to the project site for validation of the messages. Participants are then invited to attend the Sexual Health Clinic for hepatitis C screening and opportunistic STI and HIV testing.

The model provides nominal incentive payments for participants and recruits at each project step based on the accuracy of the messaging and their engagement in screening¹.

Aims

- To engage Aboriginal people who inject drugs, their family, kinship and injecting networks in conversations about hepatitis C.
- To increase screening and referral for hepatitis C, STI's and HIV.
- To reduce shame and stigma associated with Hepatitis C



Achievements

- Project was launched in NBMLHD Feb 2015 (8 hrs pw).
To date:
 - 108 Aboriginal people have participated in the project (2 people completed treatment)
 - 55 have been screened for HCV, HBV, HIV and STI's
 - Employment of a part time Aboriginal Peer Worker through NUAA to 'drive' the project, and increase cultural safety.
- NBMLHD staff acknowledged as leaders in the field of Aboriginal Hep C education and screening.
- Staff participation in successful bid for NHMRC grant, to expand project to 5 other project sites across NSW.

Planned Improvements

The NSP plans to increase local project staff capacity from 8hrs pw to 24hrs pw, and to establish minimum of 2 new targeted project sites in the LHD.

¹ Broadhead, R. S., Heckathorn, D. D., Grund, J.-P. C., Stern, L. S., & Anthony, D. L. (1995). Drug Users versus Outreach Workers in Combating AIDS: Preliminary Results of a Peer-Driven Intervention. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 25(3), 531-564.

Fast Facts – Deadly Liver Mob Project

- The DLM Project has provided access for Aboriginal people to new DAA treatments.
- Rates of hepatitis C diagnosis have increased in Indigenous populations over the last 5 years, while decreasing in the general population.
- Aboriginal people are overrepresented in prisons. Prisons, carry the largest burden of hepatitis C infection.
- Incentivising health behaviour change is an effective method of engagement for some population groups.