

Positively Hep

A peer driven cascade of care project to reduce hepatitis C transmission

Description

Positively Hep is a multidisciplinary hepatitis C project being led by the Needle and Syringe Program (NSP), in partnership with Sexual Health (SH) and the Liver Clinic.

The project targets people living with hepatitis C to penetrate peer drug-user networks and share messages about the newly available hepatitis C treatments.

Positively Hep offers small incentive based payments to clients who engage in a brief educational conversation about the new, direct acting anti-viral (DAAs) treatment for hepatitis C. Participating clients are then encouraged to share key treatment messages with up to three of their high risk peers, returning with them to the project site for validation, and the opportunity to undergo screening for HIV and hepatitis C virus, and assessment for treatment within the NSP setting.

The model provides nominal incentive payments at each project step, with participants and recruits rewarded based on the accuracy of the messaging¹.

Aims

The aim of the **Positively Hep** project is to:

- Engage known hepatitis C positive, and high risk clients in conversations and actions related to the new fast acting antiviral treatments for hepatitis C.
- Establish the NSP as an effective, accessible and client friendly one stop hepatitis C treatment site, by providing a Nurse led cascade of care approach.



Achievements

- Project was launched in March 2016. To date:
 - 270 people have participated in the project
 - 113 participants screened
 - 53 hepatitis C positive results
 - 15 participants have commenced treatment
 - 11 have completed treatment
- South Court has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Health and the broader NSP sector as the first publicly funded NSP Nationally, to provide hep c treatment within NSP.
- NSP Project team were invited to present at the International Hepatitis Health Promotion Conference in Melbourne, May 2016.
- NSP Project Team were invited to present as part of an expert panel at the annual HIV and Related Programs Health Promotion Forum in October 2016

Planned Improvements

The NSP plans to expand the **Positively Hep** project to at least two new sites across 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 – Positively Hep

- New DAA treatments have revolutionised hepatitis C treatment, making it more accessible, manageable and effective.
- After Prisons, NSP populations carry the largest burden of hepatitis C infection.
- NSP's are well placed to host Nurse led models of treatment to this high risk populations but this requires innovation in service delivery.
- Treatment within the NSP provides a greater level of understanding and support leading to reduced risk of reinfection.

