

# Positively Hep

Factors influencing engagement with a multidisciplinary incentivised Hepatitis C program for intravenous substance users



## BACKGROUND

“Positively Hep” is a multidisciplinary project led by the Needle and Syringe Program in a Western Sydney Hospital. Small monetary incentives are given for participation in education, testing and treatment of hepatitis C to target intravenous drug users with barriers to accessing mainstream healthcare.

Since program commencement in March 2016, 319 people have received education, 71 people were diagnosed with hepatitis C and 21 people initiated treatment. We aim to determine the factors associated with disengagement from screening and treatment in the eligible groups. The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population is of particular interest, comprising 3.2% of the community served by the hospital.

## METHODS

A retrospective analysis was performed on the 319 participants recruited between March 2016 and April 2018. The association between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, sex and age; with disengagement from screening was assessed using logistic regression. The association between these factors with disengagement from treatment was also assessed

## RESULTS

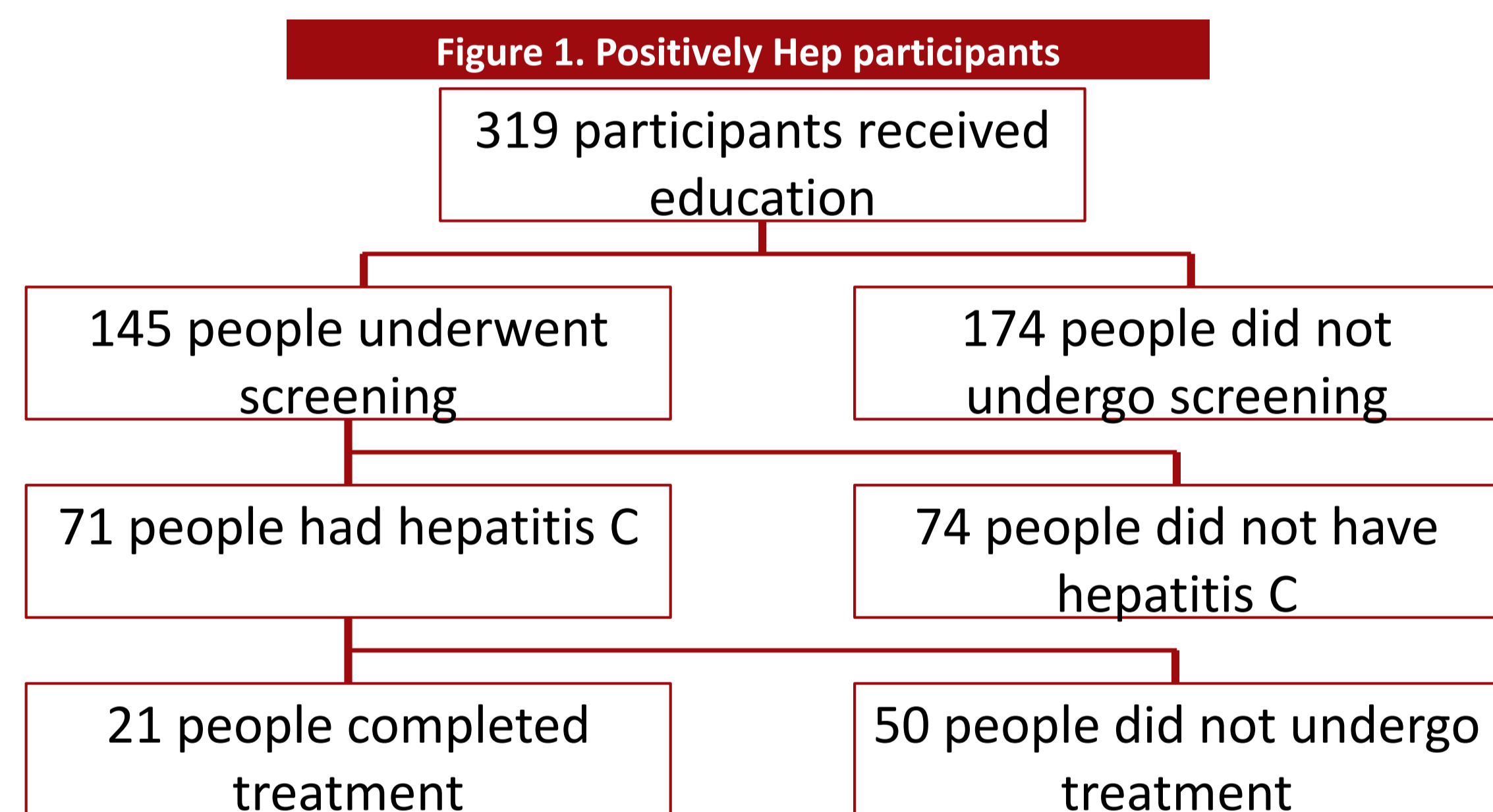
In the 319 participants, 127 (40%) were female and 81 (25%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; 145 (45%) underwent screening. In the 71 participants with hepatitis C, 21 (35%) have completed treatment. (Fig1)

In those who received education, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status was not associated with disengagement from screening ( $p=0.96$ ); nor were sex or age ( $P=0.28$ ,  $P=0.71$ ). These results were robust in multivariate regression ( $P=0.88$ ,  $P=0.33$ ,  $P=0.63$ ) (Table 1)

In those with hepatitis C, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status was not associated with disengagement from treatment ( $P=0.43$ ); nor were sex or age ( $P=0.21$ ,  $P=0.21$ ). These results were robust in multivariate regression ( $P=0.64$ ,  $P=0.22$ ,  $P=0.22$ ) (Table 2)

## CONCLUSION

This intervention saw a high proportion of engagement from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that this hospital services. Once engaged, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants were as likely to be screened and complete treatment for hepatitis C as the general population. Neither sex nor age was associated with disengagement from screening or treatment.



**Table 1. Baseline characteristics in participants who had received education**

Characteristic	Screened (N = 145)	Not screened (N = 174)
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (%)	37 (26%)	44 (25%)
Sex – female (%)	53 (37%)	74 (43%)
Mean age – years (standard deviation)	40.8 (9.5)	41.1 (9.5)

**Table 2. Baseline characteristics in participants who had hepatitis C**

Characteristic	Treated (N = 21)	Not treated (N = 70)
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (%)	4 (19%)	14 (28%)
Sex – female (%)	4 (19%)	17 (34%)
Mean age in years (standard deviation)	43.3 (8.7)	40.6 (7.7)

## AUTHORS

Dr Jinghang Luo Resident Medical Officer  
 Dr Eva Jackson Sexual Health Staff Specialist  
 Julie-Anne Downie Clinical Nurse Specialist  
 Julie Page Clinical Nurse Specialist & NSP Manager  
 Ian Bridges-Webb NSP Social Worker

For more information: [Eva.Jackson@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Eva.Jackson@health.nsw.gov.au)

Prepared June 2018

The authors declare no conflicts of interest