

IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICE MODELS OF CARE IN CUSTODIAL SETTINGS IN AUSTRALIA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE NATIONAL HEPATITIS C STRATEGY PLAY?

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Background: Australia's Fifth National Hepatitis C Strategy was released in December 2018. With the aim of achieving elimination by 2030, a significant investment has been made to provide direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment to all citizens, including those incarcerated. Australia is well-placed to achieve hepatitis C elimination, however policy and structural barriers continue to impede treatment of people living with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) in custodial settings.

AIVL, the national peer-based drug user organisation, was a key stakeholder in the development of the abovementioned Strategy. Whilst the new Strategy emphasises a renewed focus on people who inject drugs in custodial settings, given the lack of coordination between federal and state jurisdictions there is a substantial risk that improvements in models of care will not be fully achieved. There are also significant structural barriers in linking people exiting custodial settings to HCV care.

Description of model of care/intervention: This presentation will examine and analyse the policy and structural barriers that exist in relation to the goals of the National Strategy and explore how best practice models of care can be consistently implemented across Australia. An emphasis will be on the effectiveness of and need for enhanced peer-led programs, which assist people exiting custodial settings whilst on treatment to make the necessary linkages with primary health care in the community.

Effectiveness: As this is the fifth iteration of the National Hepatitis C Strategy, the effectiveness of the approach will be reviewed in terms of what models of care have previously been supported by the strategies and how effective these have been. There will also be an exploration of what has been missing from the implementation of previous strategies if Australia is going to reach its elimination goal.

Conclusion and next steps: AIVL will release a report which outlines recommendations on how best practice models of care can be developed and implemented for custodial settings, including a focus on peer-based programs. Furthermore, AIVL will continue to advocate to the Australian Government regarding the policy changes required to ensure Australia achieves hepatitis C elimination.

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