

## **CURING THE “HARD TO REACH”**

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### **Background:**

All jurisdictions in Australia now have well-established models of care for hepatitis C (HCV) in the prison setting however, these programs only service people in prisons. Despite common population risk factors for HCV transmission, care coordination, testing and treatment are not easily accessible in the probation and parole setting. Hepatitis Queensland (HQ) established a first of its kind onsite HCV testing and treatment model for people reporting to probation and parole offices.

### **Description of model of care/intervention:**

The HCV clinic was implemented at three probation and parole offices in Queensland, Australia. The one-stop-shop model comprises a general practitioner (GP), a nurse with Fibroscan and a phlebotomist. At one location, Point-of-Care testing has been piloted. The community nurse provides continuous post clinic support to HCV positive clients. Such support is essential due to the life circumstances and acute needs that take precedence over health for this cohort. An extensive evaluation was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of this model in engaging a hard-to-reach population.

### **Effectiveness:**

From August 2020 to December 2021, 139 probation and parole clients attended an onsite clinic. Of these clients, 34 tested HCV RNA positive (24%) and 66% reported a history of injecting drug use. 25 clients have been scripted and 12 clients have completed treatment. Five clients have been referred to a specialist. The model effectively addresses the issue of accessing hepatitis C cure while not having a regular GP or fixed address, a common scenario with this cohort. As one client put it, “This was so easy to do. Thank you”.

### **Conclusion and next steps:**

On-site HCV testing and treatment clinics at probation and parole offices represent a unique opportunity to link people who inject drugs to life-changing healthcare. The model can be replicated in other jurisdictions and is a significant opportunity to contribute to the elimination of hepatitis C in Australia.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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