

HEPATITIS B AND C HEALTH PROMOTION AND PRISON TO COMMUNITY FOLLOW-UP IN SOUTH-WESTERN UGANDA

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Background:

Hepatitis B is highly prevalent in Uganda, and is often highest among people in rural areas, and people of lower-socio economic status. Like many countries, there is considerable misunderstanding of hepatitis B, which results in stigma and discrimination. To overcome this, Great Lake Peace Centre has been providing hepatitis B education and services in the community. Through networks with Rotary Snow Peaks Kasese, we extended this to prisons in our region, and have also started providing education for hepatitis C as well.

Description of model of care:

We provide education and awareness about hepatitis B and C to people in prison and the staff working there. When people are released from prison, using our hepatitis community ambassadors, we provide them with help for hepatitis B including testing, vaccination, and linkage to care as appropriate. We also provide psycho-social support and help with reintegration into the community.

Effectiveness:

To date, we have tested 154 people for hepatitis B in three prisons in our region, 10 (6.5%) had active hepatitis B infection, and they have all been linked to care at health facilities in our region. Many of these people live in mountainous areas and during COVID-19 the only people who were allowed to travel were healthcare workers. To help these people maintain and monitor their treatment, we travelled by motorbikes, bicycles and by foot to deliver medications and take blood samples to monitor viral load and ensure viral suppression.

Conclusion and next steps:

Our program has been able to engage marginalised people who have been in prison and link them to hepatitis B care. The next steps for our program are to work with researchers and other stakeholders to expand this model of care to other prisons in Uganda. Once hepatitis C diagnostics are available via the Ugandan government, we are well-positioned to incorporate hepatitis C care into our program.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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