

# Social Media Underpinning Digital Pathways to Hep C Elimination:

## Hep Connect hep C treatment support program

Author: Wilkinson S, Hepatitis NSW

### Background/Approach

The Hepatitis NSW Hep Connect hep C treatment support program, in partnership with the Perx Health app, reached out to hep C patients through social media during the COVID pandemic. We promoted personal ownership through a client self-enrolment link.

The pandemic impacted referrals from clinicians to our program. New patients were predominantly acquired from direct-to-consumer marketing through social media.

Hep Connect and the Perx Health digital technology self-management app supported client's hep C treatment journey through daily reminders and incentives including rewards and vouchers for task completed, where they otherwise would have been lost to follow-up or slow to initiate treatment. This overcomes common barriers to DAA uptake.



### Analysis/Argument:

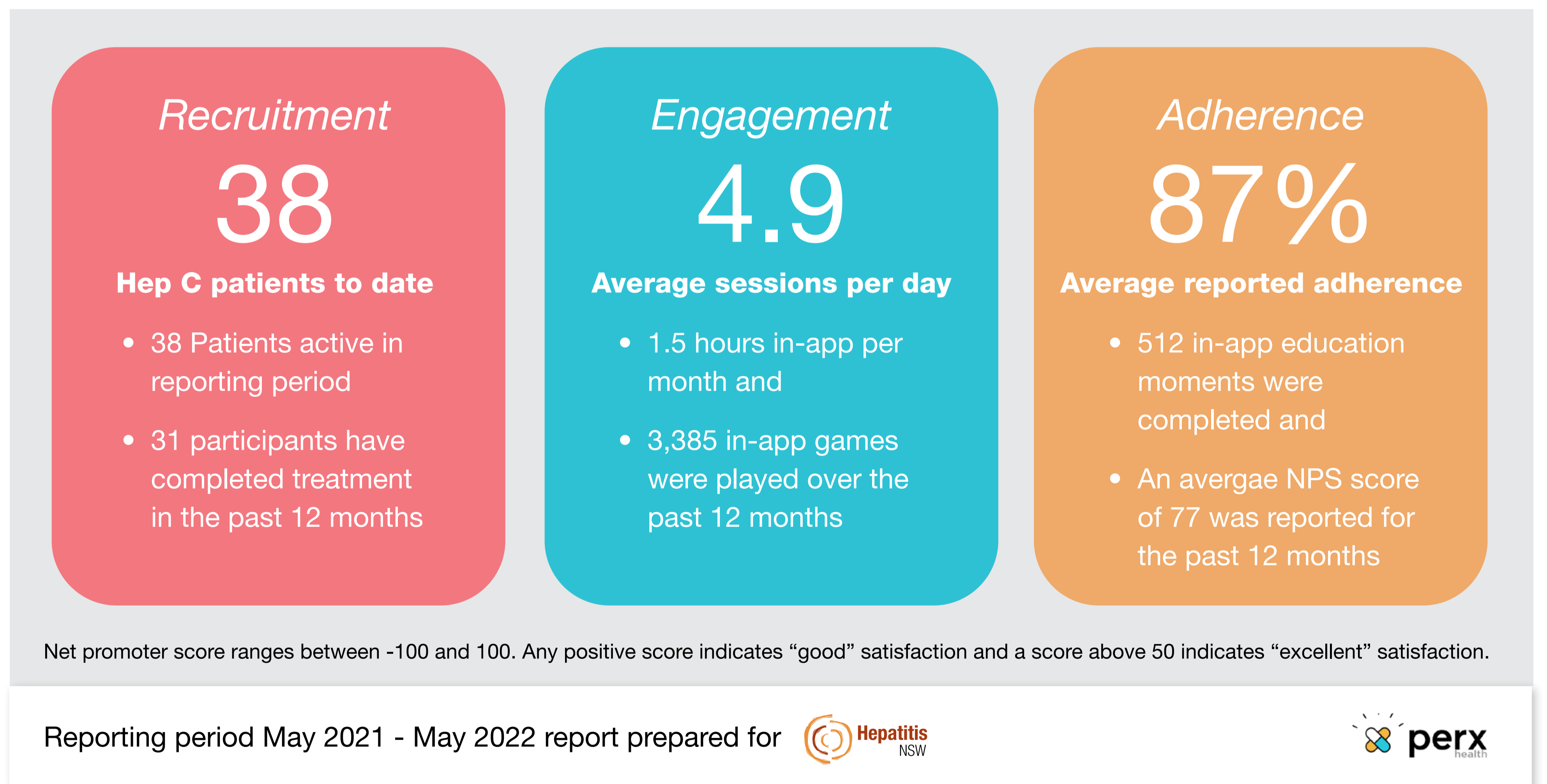
The Perx Health app self-enrolment link overcame various factors like distance and location; healthcare workers' and services declining numbers in rural and remote areas resulting in lack of clinical follow-up; stigma and discrimination; and waiting periods or missed specialist appointments if referred onwards.

### Outcome/Results:

Between May 2021 to May 2022 the Perx Health app has engaged 38 people to start DAAs, 7 are current clients and 31 people have completed treatment.

In October 2021 four social media ads on the Hepatitis NSW Facebook page resulted in 195 click throughs from 19,643 people reached of whom 16,178 were in NSW. There were 253 post engagements of which 63% identified as women and 37% as men.

The average engagement time per client per week was 47 minutes, and 3,385 games were played during the past 12 months.



### Conclusions/Applications:

Since its launch in April 2021 the Perx Health app through the social media ads' self-enrolment has improved hep C patients' health seeking behaviour, promoting their autonomy and motivating their self-determination to actively engage in their healthcare.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** Hepatitis NSW and the Hep Connect program are funded by a grant from the NSW Ministry of Health. This activity was partially funded by an unrestricted educational grant from AbbVie Pty Ltd.

