

Addressing stigma associated with hepatitis B among Chinese and Korean Australians: Family Health and Cancer Prevention

Authors: Kim M, Lu C, Davidson S

Background

At the end of 2017, an estimated 233,947¹ people were living with chronic hepatitis B infection in Australia, of those, 21% were born in Northeast Asia and 17% were born in Southeast Asia.

Most people who are living with hepatitis B in Australia became exposed at birth through mother to child transmission.

Hepatitis NSW bilingual educators work with Chinese and Korean communities to raise awareness, encourage vaccination, screening, monitoring and treatment of hepatitis B.

People living with hepatitis B in mainland China and Korea experience significant discrimination, largely attributed to misunderstandings about transmission, with most people regarding HBV as highly contagious and fatal. Common misperceptions, such as that hepatitis B can be transmitted by sharing drinking glasses, cooking utensils and food, highlight lack of awareness.

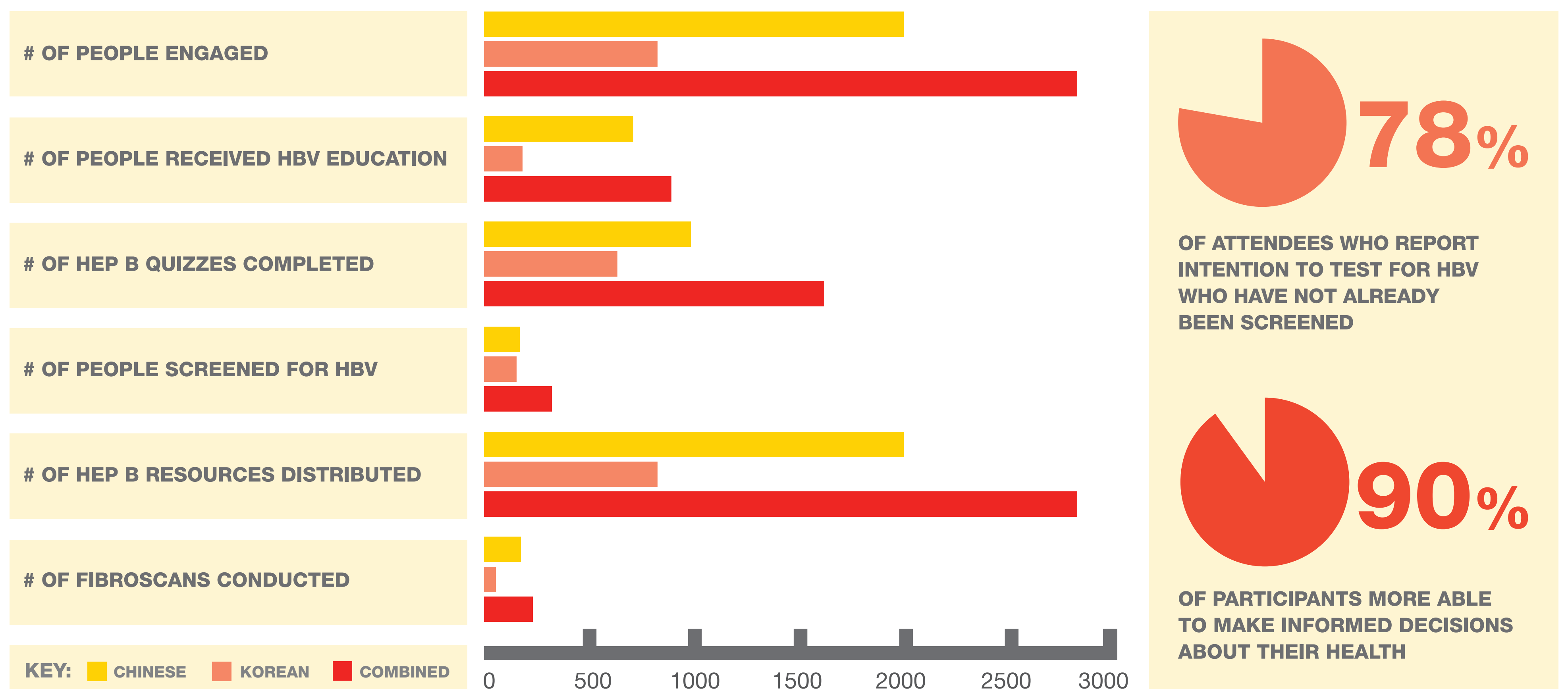
Argument

Research has demonstrated that people in China lack initiative to undergo screening possibly due to fear.² Furthermore, hepatitis B knowledge and awareness are low in Asian immigrant communities.² To foster demand for testing and treatment and to help reach national testing and treatment targets we have approached hepatitis B education as a family health and cancer prevention issue, which aligns with the Third National Hepatitis B Strategy.

Chinese and Korean communities care deeply about their health and the health of their families. Adopting a family health and cancer prevention strategy and conducting hepatitis B education in partnership with community organisations provides a holistic health approach, reduces stigma associated with hepatitis B, and fosters interest and participation in community.

We partner with cultural activity groups and services that cater to the needs of different generations, including children, young parents and grandparents. Bi-lingual medical specialists were also invited to some of our events to deliver liver health knowledge and clinical support to audiences, which greatly helped to promote awareness and build up referral pathways.

Korean and Chinese Program Reach



Results

From July 2018 to June 2019, 2,811 Chinese and Korean Australians have received information and education sessions covering hepatitis B, transmission, vaccination, harm reduction, monitoring and treatment. Over 78% of participants who have not already been tested for hepatitis B would consider doing so, and 90% would recommend their family members undergo testing.

Conclusion

Health promotion events with broad appeal strengthen the opportunity to deliver key health messages, including that hepatitis B is completely preventable and treatable. Providing a holistic health and family health approach to health promotion successfully breaks down stigma and discrimination improving attendance and engagement among Chinese and Korean Australians.



Korean Health Expo, Lidcombe. Left to right: Cristina Lu, Sandy Davidson, Amy Phu, Kristen McKee and Jeffrey Dabbhadatta.



Chinese Seniors Health Gala at Ashfield Town Hall.

1. The Kirby Institute. National blood-borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections surveillance and monitoring report, 2018. Sydney: Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney; 2018.

2. Lee H, Fawcett J, Kim D, Yang JH. Correlates of hepatitis B virus-related stigmatization experienced by Asians: A scoping review of literature. Asian Pacific Journal Oncology Nursing; 3(4):324-334, 2016

Disclosure of Interest Statement

Hepatitis NSW (HNSW) hepatitis B health promotion and health education programs are funded by HNSW, Western Sydney PHN, and Central and Eastern Sydney PHN. No pharmaceutical company grants funded this work.