

CLEARING THE PATH:

A partnership to deliver a communications campaign to increase hepatitis C treatment access for people who inject drugs

Background

People who inject drugs are a priority population within state and national hepatitis C strategies, and more needs to be done to help with access to hepatitis C information, testing and treatment for this important population. Barriers such as stigma and discrimination need to be addressed, along with myths and misinformation about treatment effectiveness, eligibility if using drugs, duration, side effects and costs.

A communications campaign, to clear the path for increased direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment access was developed through a partnership between NSW Ministry of Health, Hepatitis NSW and NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA).



Facts about the DAA treatment were designed into posters.

Analysis

The campaign used bright colourful text-only design placed in and around NSPs. The campaign gave facts about the DAA treatment and the call to action "Talk to us now" aimed to start conversations. Peer workers with lived experience of hepatitis C treatment and/or injecting drug use visited services and talked with clients. Clinical services were provided on site, when possible, to remove practical barriers, such as travel and time limitations.

Peer workers delivered sessions to:

- promote the campaign messages
- build trust
- start conversations
- address myths
- create a bridge into testing and treatment
- distribute merchandise as an engagement tool

Up to 38% of people approached by a peer worker started the conversation and took the first step by seeing the nurse to test.

The campaign reached thousands of people within and around the NSPs and prompted 506 visits to the website. Hepatitis NSW peer workers attended 22 sites, engaged with 325 people of whom 111 Dried Blood Spot tests were completed.



Hepatitis NSW and NUAA peer workers actively engaged with clients on site.

Conclusions/Applications

Despite COVID restrictions, the campaign increased PWID's access to testing and treatment and created linkages to care.

- well received and popular with staff in services
- positive, uplifting messages
- helped to start conversations about hep C treatment
- the campaign has been customised for delivery into NSW prisons

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None.

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Outcome / Results

The campaign reached 87 Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) across NSW, chosen by Local Health District staff as suitable sites for peer worker promotion and clinical services.

Media advertising was placed nearby to create a buzz and reinforce messages:

- posters (5 messages)
- pull up banners
- street pole posters
- street stencils
- street posters
- washroom advertising in 108 pubs, clubs and bars
- T shirts for staff and peer workers

Call to action: *Talk to us now*

- in-person at service sites
- call the Hepatitis Infoline
- visit the website
- Live Chat

Activations:

The campaign had three more activations after the January launch to meet the needs of sites and clients, resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown of March 2020.

The website had 506 visits with 1,075 page view occasions of service.

Distribution / reach:

- #1 Jan 2020: 46,000
- #2 April 2020: 19,000
- #3 July 2020: 87,690
- #4 Oct 2020: 21,200



Campaign merchandise incentivised delivery of the campaign messages into community networks.

Media / online	Print	Merchandise
Street posters	550 posters	T shirts (long & short sleeve)
Street pole posters	Postcards	Bucket hats
Washroom advertising	Concertina cards (Z-Card)	Drink bottles
Street stencils (pavement)	Stickers for dispensing machines (ADMs)	Pens
Street banners (City of Sydney, Randwick City Council)	Pull up banners	Face masks (reusable)
Campaign website		Lanyards
e-newsletters		Phone cardholders (Z-Card inserted)
3rd party promotion (print, online)		Hand sanitisers



Street posters



Pole posters



Pavement stencils



Street banners



Convenience advertising



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