

# Digital Pathways to Hep C Elimination: The HepConnect Program

## Background:

Following external consultation with clinicians and HARP representatives from four LHD's – Sydney, Western Sydney, Mid-North Coast and Western NSW and Hepatitis NSW peer workforce, Hep Connect patient support and treatment adherence program transitioned from SMS Tech to a digital therapeutic app, called Perx Health.

Hep Connect supports people living with hep C from testing, through treatment all the way to cure. Supported by behavioural science research the Perx health app uses multiple components to improve medication adherence and health-seeking behaviour including gamification, community, education, incentive vouchers and challenges.



## Argument:

Many people detected as hepatitis C antibody positive and those newly diagnosed with hep C are lost to follow-up or slow to initiate treatment. Influencing factors include lack of follow-up by the clinician, stigma and discrimination experienced by people who inject drugs and delay in seeing a specialist if referred onwards.

Self-management models have been found to improve health-seeking behaviour. Research conducted by University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney have found the Perx Health app motivates people to actively engage in their healthcare demonstrating sustained medication adherence of approximately 90% and a 30% increase over standard care.

Primary healthcare effort is required to reach hep C elimination targets. Models that assist patients and primary healthcare clinicians to minimise loss to follow-up and speed-up treatment initiation may instil greater confidence and willingness for general practitioners to prescribe treatment.

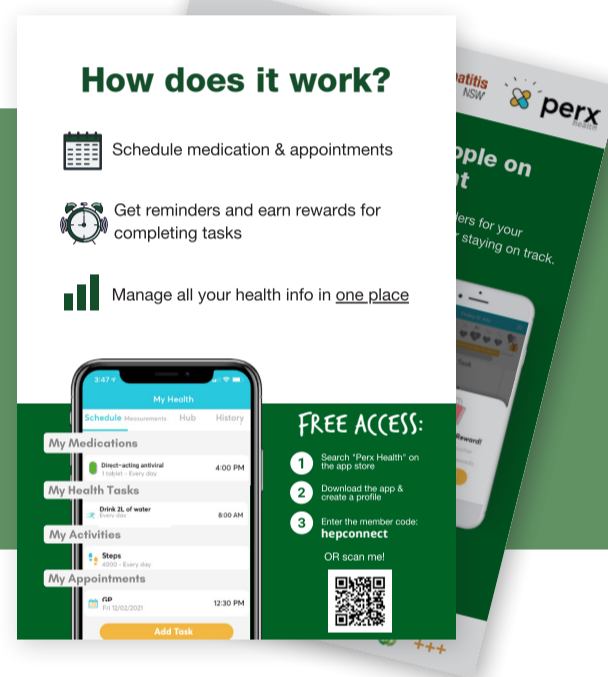
Moreover, increased access to hep C treatment in primary care will improve equity by allowing the public health system to focus on more complex populations, including people who inject drugs.

## Outcome:

The Hep Connect program has supported more than 26 patients and over 85% of people completed their treatment in 2020. The interest in the Perx Health smart phone app has been extremely positive with uptake by Western Sydney, Mid-North Coast and South Western Sydney LHDs thus far. ASHM are also supporting uptake in primary healthcare settings.

## Onboarding patients:

- Onboarding a client is easy and takes less than a minute.
- Clinicians can also onboard on behalf of their client using their own referral code.
- Onboarding pack for patients – flyer, membership card with QR code, welcome letter and collapsible drink bottle.



## Perx app features:

- No advertising
- No data provided to third parties
- Privacy disclosure and consent consistent with NSW Health guidelines
- Automated onboarding emails and SMS messages for referred patients
- Support chat for clinicians
- Rewards based – voucher incentives for medication adherence, attending appointments
- Custom education content
- Evaluation PROMS and PREMS
- Will operate for a month if a client does not have any data.

