



Kyle Leadbeatter

The HEPATITIS INFOLINE

Community-led and community-leading developments in the viral hepatitis community

Most phone-based information services provide a one-way service where callers only receive information from a trained worker. The **Hepatitis Infoline** is an example of a service that also offers an invaluable portal for the community to pass on information to the organisation.

Developments in the community can often take time to filter up to the organisational level and even longer to have an effect at the policy and strategy level but the Hepatitis Infoline offers an important avenue for the community's voice to be truly heard and acted upon.

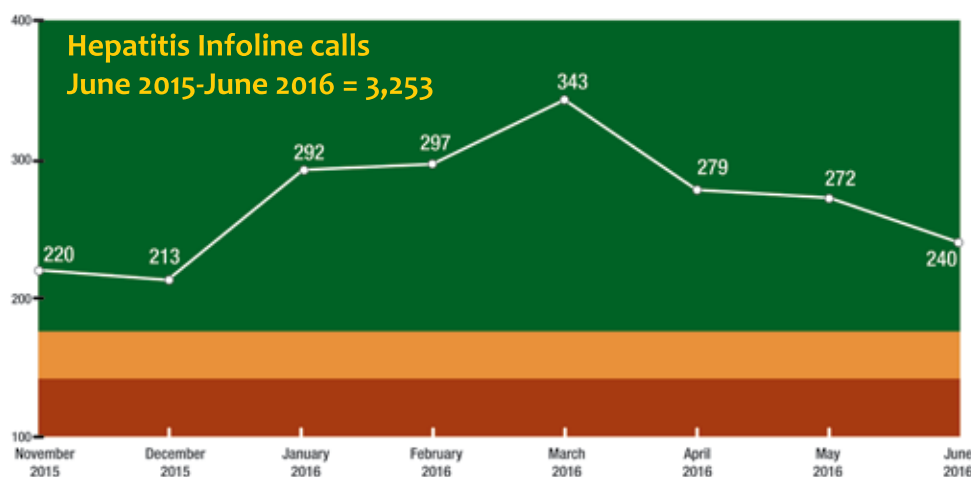


TABLE: Calls to THE HEPATITIS INFOLINE (November 2015 - June 2016)

The **Hepatitis Infoline** has a target of 175 calls per month but regularly exceeds this. In March of 2016, with the release of the new hepatitis C treatments, the Hepatitis Infoline received almost double its call target. The Infoline was able to answer the many questions our community had, direct people to services, talk about side-effects and effectiveness, help callers navigate the new hepatitis C treatment landscape and report on issues experienced by our community.



Some of our successes

■ The wait for PBS listing of new DAA treatments

In mid-to-late 2015 it emerged that many members of our community were importing generic hepatitis C treatments from India and China as the wait for PBS listing of the treatments in Australia dragged on. The Infoline was a vital portal during this time for information to be passed to us about the frustration, concern and ingenuity of the community around importing these new treatments. The calls on the Infoline were vital in Hepatitis NSW changing its organisational position to reflect our community's position and to be an honest, impartial source of information on this developing issue.

■ New hepatitis C treatments

The Hepatitis Infoline has been an unparalleled source of information on the new hepatitis C treatments in NSW. This allowed us to be at the forefront of issues faced during the rollout of the new treatments in March 2016 as well as help hundreds of callers find out how and where to access life-changing hepatitis C treatment.

■ Treatment side-effects

The Infoline has been a great portal for our community to discuss and report the side effects of the new hepatitis C treatments. We are in the process of compiling these in order to accurately reflect the experiences of undergoing the new hepatitis C treatments and inform the direction of support services in the future.

■ Pharmacy dispensing issues

At the beginning of the rollout of the new hepatitis C treatments, there were issues with those who had acquired a prescription for new hepatitis C treatments finding a pharmacy that was willing to fill that prescription. We worked with the Ministry of Health and Pharmacy Guild to relay the issues faced by the community in order to quickly rectify this initial problem and streamline access to new treatments.

■ Advocacy to Justice Health

Hepatitis NSW are one of 20 services that offer a direct phone line to all people in custody. This Infoline also enables people in custody to report their issues with testing and treatment around hepatitis C to us. Hepatitis Infoline staff can then advocate to Justice Health on the person's behalf to ensure their hepatitis health needs are met in a timely, appropriate, and effective manner.



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