

EC UPDATE - DECEMBER 2021



CONCLUSION OF THE EC VICTORIA PARTNERSHIP

After five years, the EC Victoria Partnership will be wrapping up at the end of 2021. In that time, there were several main achievements including:

- Convening a health promotion working group and funded partners to develop hepatitis C resources for people who inject drugs.
- Provision of clinical nursing support at EC sites, including on-site pathology, fibroscans, treatment assessments, referrals and support to service staff to recall and follow up clients.
- Developed the EC Practice Support toolkit, which has been disseminated and utilised nationally and globally.
- Implemented a range of research activities including Rapid-EC (rapid testing in primary care, PATH (peer-based linkage to care models) and the EC Experience cohort.
- Supported the development of a state-wide program on viral hepatitis assessment and treatment in prisons with St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.

Among others, these achievements led to a range of academic publications and further funding sources, notably EC Australia which will continue into 2022.

We would like to thank our partners who made this all possible, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, Harm Reduction Victoria, LiverWELL and the Victorian Department of Health, as well as the many clinical and community organisations who have been involved and supported us.

There is still much work to be done moving into the next phases of hepatitis C elimination by 2030, and we look forward to opportunities to collaborate in the future.

[A more detailed summary of the activities and achievements of the EC Victoria Partnership can be found here.](#)

EC EXPERIENCE COHORT

Interviews for the EC Experience cohort will also be concluding at the end of 2021. Since 2018 we successfully recruited over 300 people into the study. Analysis of the longitudinal data to examine engagement in hepatitis C care will be a key focus for 2022.

We've also commenced a qualitative research project that involves interviewing EC Experience participants about financially incentivising hepatitis C testing and treatment and potential models for doing so.

For more information contact Daniel O'Keefe, dan.okeefe@burnet.edu.au

UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

ST VINCENT'S PRISON PROGRAM

As of the 1st of July the statewide hepatitis program (SHP) in Victorian prisons has been operational for 6 years. We've now treated over 3000 people in custody for hepatitis C.

Like most health programs, the COVID 19 pandemic has necessitated adaption of normal service delivery.

The team have continued to work closely with all primary health care teams in prisons to ensure viral hepatitis services are ongoing.

The Covid Safe plan is adhered to and SHP staff continue to monitor closely advice from DJCS, DHS and St Vincent's Hospital. The SHP is hoping to well and truly back in prisons by early 2021, upscaling testing for and treatment Hepatitis C.

For more information contact Anne Craigie anne.craigie@svha.org.au

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Updated strategies

The Victorian Hepatitis C Strategy 2016-2020 and the refreshed Victorian Hepatitis C plan (due to be released in 2022) explicitly identify the need to take full advantage of treatment for hepatitis C, including redesigning the way in which hepatitis C prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care are delivered. This project aligns well with Victoria's hepatitis C strategic goals and will significantly assist to accelerate efforts to achieve the elimination of hepatitis C as a public health concern by 2030.

National Point-of-Care Testing program

The Victorian Department of Health is pleased to be a partner agency in the Kirby Institute's national program to scale up point of care (POC) hepatitis C testing and treatment.

For more information contact Elizabeth Birbilis, Elizabeth.Birbilis@health.vic.gov.au

UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

LIVERWELL

Ballarat Hepatitis C forum

LiverWELL teamed up with Ballarat Community Health and Uniting to hold an information day in Ballarat and Horsham. With healthy food and drink, information and support from staff and brochures, people in the community were encouraged to get tested and treated for hepatitis C. The project was supported by The Burnet Institute.



Rumbalara World Hepatitis Day Events

An inspiring Welcome to Country by Uncle Lance kicked off the forum at Rumbalara Cooperative, which brought together the local Aboriginal community who had been treated for hepatitis C. Mandy shared her lived experience story, and participants reflected about being cured from hepatitis C. These reflections will be used to create a resource to encourage people to access treatment and reduce stigma.

Bendigo Regional Forum Date Set

LiverWELL has set a date for the Bendigo Regional Forum for May 18th, 2022. The forum will be workforce training and cover viral hepatitis. Mildura Regional Forum is also in the works for the first half of the year.

For more information contact Chloe Pedley, chloe@liverwell.org.au

HARM REDUCTION VICTORIA

PATH-EX Peer model

The Path project has finished up and sadly we have had to say goodbye to our awesome peer specialists, Stu and Sammy. We would like to acknowledge their contribution toward the project as well as all the hard work done by the integrated hep C nurses, Sally and Sandra.

Co-designing the National health promotion campaign

The Health Promotion Team at Harm Reduction Victoria have been active participants in a co design project with EC Australia that involves peer-workers from across the country. It's been great to work with like minded people in the design of a national hep C campaign and we finally have an end in sight! The messages are being fine tuned and focus tested with an intended launch early in the new year. We think that the campaign looks great and can't wait to see it posted all around town!

For more information contact Jane, JaneD@hrvic.org.au

NEW RESEARCH & OTHER UPDATES

SECTOR NEWS

Australia's progress towards hepatitis C elimination—Annual Report 2021

In October The Burnet Institute in collaboration with The Kirby Institute released the updated report on 'Australia's progress towards hepatitis C elimination' for 2021.

The report highlights a decline in hepatitis C testing and treatment uptake nationally, putting Australia at risk of not achieving its target of eliminating hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030.

Treatment initiations in prisons constituted 37% of all treatments nationally in 2020 (up from 30% in 2019), highlighting the increasing importance of the prison sector in hepatitis C testing and treatment.

[The report can be accessed here.](#)



LATEST PUBLICATIONS

[A multi-site, nurse-coordinated hepatitis C model of care in primary care and community services in Melbourne, Australia](#)

[Progress and remaining challenges to address hepatitis C, other infectious diseases, and drug-related harms to improve the health of people who use drugs](#)

[Health service utilisation and experiences of stigma among people who inject drugs in Melbourne, Australia](#)

[The Incidence of Hepatitis C Among Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex With Men in Australia, 2009-2019](#)

[High effectiveness of broad access direct-acting antiviral therapy for hepatitis C in an Australian real-world cohort: The REACH-C Study](#)

RESEARCH PROJECT RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

A team from La Trobe University are recruiting people who have experienced DAA treatment for 1hr research interviews. The interviews will explore their experiences of life post-cure, including any ongoing stigma or discrimination related to hepatitis C. Participants will be reimbursed \$50 for their time.

For more information, contact Dion Kagan, d.kagan@latrobe.edu.au