

# THE ELIMINATE HEPATITIS C PARTNERSHIP



EC Partnership

EC UPDATE - JULY 2019

## WORLD HEPATITIS DAY 2019

### EC WORLD HEPATITIS DAY CAMPAIGN

To celebrate [World Hepatitis Day](#) on July 28th, the EC Partnership is working with five EC sites to run a testing campaign.

The aim of the campaign is to increase the number of people tested for hepatitis C, particularly amongst clients who may not yet have engaged in hepatitis C care, or re-engaged since the introduction of direct-acting antivirals. The participating sites are:

- **Access Health:** 23rd & 24th July and 12th August
- **Barwon Health:** 22nd to 26th July
- **Health Works Cohealth:** 31st July
- **Innerspace Cohealth:** 23rd, 24th & 26th July
- **Mediclinic:** 31st July to 2nd August

Each site is hosting a 1-5 day festival type community event (including BBQs, food trucks etc.). There will be incentives to encourage testing in those who haven't recently been tested and to encourage clients to bring friends along. The events are sponsored by Hepatitis Victoria Liverability grants.

EC will be providing on-site clinical support, including phlebotomy and Fibroscan, and distributing t-shirts and promotional material. For more information contact Kico, [kico.chan@burnet.edu.au](mailto:kico.chan@burnet.edu.au).



### BURNET WORLD HEPATITIS DAY SYMPOSIUM

The Burnet Institute is also holding a World Hepatitis Day Symposium on the 29th of July.

The Symposium theme is "Community based approaches to Elimination" and expert speakers will discuss topics ranging from 'Testing in the Community' through to 'Global Cure and International Collaboration'.

Speakers will include representatives from ARCSHS, the Burnet Institute, the Cancer Council, Harm Reduction Victoria, Hepatitis Victoria, Penington Institute, The Alfred and the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory.

Find out more and register to attend [here](#).

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING WITH THE EC TEAM?

### EC SITES

The EC nurses are currently working with nine sites, delivering tailored support to scale up hepatitis C care. Nurses are assisting with caseload assessment, implementation of nurse-led testing, provision of on-site phlebotomy, and developing enhanced pathways for follow-up and treatment uptake. The sites currently being supported are:

- Ballarat Community Health
- Access Health
- Mediclinic
- Health Works Cohealth
- Genesis Medical Centre
- Innerspace Cohealth
- Lygon Court Medical Centre

Contact Chloe, [chloe.layton@burnet.edu.au](mailto:chloe.layton@burnet.edu.au) for more information.

### EC EXPERIENCE COHORT

The EC Experience Cohort aims to better understand people's experiences of treatment and identify barriers and enablers to taking up DAAs.

As of July 2019, we have completed:

- Recruitment of 141 participants
- Baseline interviews at two sites
- Six-month follow-up interviews at one of these sites

Recruitment at a third site has recently commenced and is scheduled to be completed in August 2019.

Contact Jack, [jack.gunn@burnet.edu.au](mailto:jack.gunn@burnet.edu.au) for more information.

### ACCESS REPORTING

The anonymous patient data extracted via ACCESS provides an assessment of hep C management at EC sites and other participating clinics across the state.

ACCESS is now in place at ten EC sites. A mid-year data review is planned for the end of July, with site-specific reports to be sent to all EC clinics. For more information, contact Michael, [michael.traeger@burnet.edu.au](mailto:michael.traeger@burnet.edu.au).

### HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

In addition to supporting other aspects of EC activities, the health promotion team have been busy with the following:

- Providing feedback from participants in the EC Experience Cohort to HRVic on their pocket size resource (developed with EC funding).
- Supporting Hepatitis Victoria to revise their fitpack stickers, which are funded by EC Victoria.
- Progressing the PWID Mapping project, which aims to help EC and others identify and target specific sub-groups of PWID for health promotion, and is informing the EC Australia Health Promotion campaign.

The next Health Promotion Reference group meeting will be held soon. Members of the group watch out in your inbox for further information. If anyone would like to join the group please contact Judy, [judy.gold@burnet.edu.au](mailto:judy.gold@burnet.edu.au)

## UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

### HARM REDUCTION VICTORIA

#### New Hepatitis C Peer Specialists

HRVic will soon be launching a new program in partnership with the Burnet Institute and Access Health in St Kilda. The program, including a research component, will investigate the effectiveness of peer navigation for hepatitis C treatment, in both clinic and outreach settings. We hope to begin around World Hepatitis Day this year.

#### Health Promotion Workshops

With the financial year recently ending, the HRVic health promotion team are looking back on the year's work and evaluating our impact. In 2018-2019 we provided 49 workshop education sessions to approximately 650 participants. Around half of these workshops had a BBV focus.

#### Peer Network Program

Our peer-to-peer NSP, the Peer Network Program, is another component of our BBV prevention work. The PNP has continued to grow with nearly 3000 contacts in 90 postcodes this year. The program has distributed around 85,000 needles and syringes to PWID unwilling or unable to access a mainstream service.

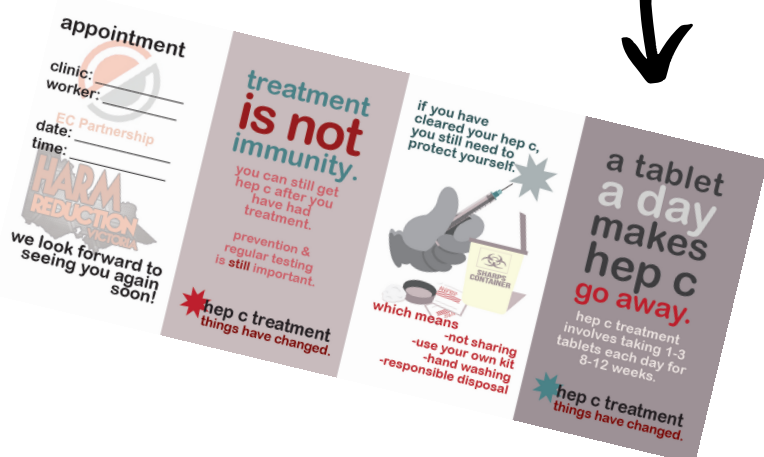
Preliminary analysis of our volunteers' data collection shows that, were it not for the PNP, around 20% of their contacts would have needed to share or reuse on the occasion that the PNP provided them with new equipment.

We have recently trained five new volunteers and are looking forward to growing the program even further in 2019-20.

#### Pocket resource

The pocket-sized resource, funded by the EC Partnership, has been further refined in response to feedback from the EC Cohort. The resource provides key messages around hepatitis C treatment and busts common myths around treatment, re-infection and re-treatment. The resource will be distributed by HRVic peer educators and health promotion workers.

If you are interested in using the resource please get in touch with Sam, [samj@hrvic.org.au](mailto:samj@hrvic.org.au).



## UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

### ST VINCENT'S PRISON PROGRAM

The state-wide hepatitis assessment and treatment program in Victorian Prisons has just turned 4!

St Vincent's has run the State-wide Hepatitis Program (SHP) in Victorian Prisons from 2015-2019. The program has performed clinical assessments for more than 3000 prisoners who are living with viral hepatitis and commenced more than 2000 prisoners on antiviral therapy. The cure rate for prisoners living with Hepatitis C virus (HCV) who have been treated in the SHP program to date has been > 90%. The SHP program has been recognised by national and international awards, including a World Health Organization Award for Innovation in Hepatitis Testing.

The SHP has a strong and consultative relationship with local prison health care providers. The SHP continues to collaboratively engage prison health service providers and Corrections Victoria in awareness (program promotion, health promotion and education) activities to support the uptake of prisoners to participate in the program.

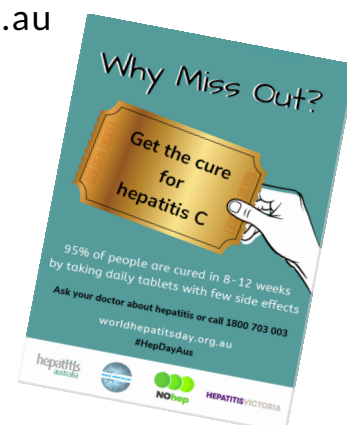
The program is funded by Justice Health, the Dept. Justice and Community Safety. Contact SVHM.shp@svha.org.au for more information.

## HEPATITIS VICTORIA

### 2019 LIVERability Festival

With World Hepatitis Day on the horizon, Hepatitis Victoria's annual LIVERability Festival has arrived. This includes a range of events run by community organisations supported by the LIVERability grants to raise awareness of viral hepatitis including at alcohol and other drug services, homeless services, culturally and linguistically diverse groups and organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For the full calendar of events and more information see [here](#):

For more information contact [martin@hepvic.org.au](mailto:martin@hepvic.org.au)



### HepVic custodial work

- Our prison staff survey has wrapped up and we were grateful to get over 300 responses with representatives from every Victorian prison. Data analysis from this survey is currently being finalised.
- The Victorian prison staff poster and booklet have been finalised and printed and look great. We are in negotiations around the distribution strategy.



## HEPATITIS VICTORIA

### Fit pack stickers

Supported by the EC Partnership, Hepatitis Victoria has been working to develop new and updated Fit Pack stickers, designed for NSP services to distribute on Fit Packs or disposal containers. Currently they are being distributed to major metropolitan NSP services, as well as offered to secondary NSP services, predominantly in regional Victoria. They are 120mm x 70mm. They are available to order now [here](#).

For more information contact [isabelle@hepvic.org.au](mailto:isabelle@hepvic.org.au)



## HEPATITIS C

### BUSTING THE MYTHS

Viral hepatitis (such as hepatitis B and C) causes liver inflammation and damage. It affects a lot of people and can be very serious but is often poorly understood.

There are lots of myths about viral hepatitis that contribute to stigma and discrimination and can stop people getting the help they need.

**Get the facts and help stop stigma!**

**Treatment for hepatitis C involves injections and makes people really sick**

**FALSE!**

**True:** Treatment to cure hepatitis C has changed a lot. It is now tablets only, no interferon with only very mild side effects, if any! It is very effective with a 95% success rate of curing hepatitis C.

**People living with hepatitis C are fine and it doesn't seem to cause any problems**

**FALSE!**

**True:** People living with hepatitis C may experience symptoms such as being tired, losing their appetite and feeling like they have 'brain fog'. More seriously, living with hepatitis C increases the risk of liver cancer and liver failure. Getting treatment for hepatitis C will reduce this risk.

**Hepatitis C only effects people who have a history of injecting drug use**

**FALSE!**

**True:** It is discrimination to treat anyone differently on the basis of their hepatitis C status and/or how they contracted it. Hepatitis C is transmitted when the blood of a person living with hepatitis C gets into the bloodstream of someone else. Sharing injecting equipment is the most common way hepatitis C is transmitted in Australia. There are other transmission risks including unsterile tattoos and piercings and blood transfusions overseas or before 1990 in Australia.

**If someone is currently using drugs or drinking then they can't get hepatitis C treatment**

**FALSE!**

**True:** Everyone over 18 with a Medicare card can access treatment and should be encouraged to do so – there are no restrictions.

For further information, check out the Hepatitis Victoria website: [www.hepvic.org.au](http://www.hepvic.org.au)

Or download the **LiverWELL** app.

**hepatitisinfo**  
1800 703 003

**HEPATITIS VICTORIA**  
**LiverWELL**

### Myth-busting, stop stigma poster

Hepatitis Victoria has developed a new poster resource myth busting commonly held misinformation about hepatitis B and C. This misinformation contributes to stigma and discrimination. Through community consultation some of the most prevalent and pertinent myths were collated to be used on the posters. These posters are suitable for clinical settings, broader support services and anyone working with people at risk of or living with viral hepatitis. They are A3 size.

For more information and to order contact [isabelle@hepvic.org.au](mailto:isabelle@hepvic.org.au)

## NEW RESEARCH & OTHER UPDATES

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

The [results of the Prime study, a randomised controlled trial](#) comparing community-based treatment for hepatitis C to hospital-based care, have been published in the journal, Clinical Infectious Diseases. Results showed higher rates of treatment uptake and success in primary care.

The [results of the Rapid-EC pilot study](#) have been published in the International Journal of Drug Policy. The study was conducted at three sites in Melbourne and explored the feasibility and acceptability of NSP-based testing for hepatitis C using point-of-care tests.

The [first of a series of reports](#) aimed at primary care providers covering clinical management of hepatitis C has been published in Medicine Today. More reports will be published in the coming months.

A [qualitative exploration](#) of the perspectives of OST patients on the idea of directly observed hep C treatment was published in the journal, Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### Australasian Viral Hepatitis Elimination Conference (AVHEC)

AVHEC will be held on the 5th and 6th of August in Sydney. Members of the EC team will be presenting our nurse-led model, PWID mapping work, and ACCESS data estimations of the hep C care cascade across Victoria.

To find out more, visit the conference website [here](#).

### International Conference on Hepatitis Care in Substance Users (INHSU)

Members of the EC team will also be presenting work at INHSU in Montreal 11th to 13th September. To find out more, visit the conference website [here](#).

## UPDATE ON PHARM EC

The PharmEC project is a randomised controlled trial comparing point-of-care testing and treatment for hepatitis C by a nurse in pharmacies with standard provision of information only. The target group is people who are currently taking OST.

The trial is a collaboration with researchers in Scotland and Wales. In Melbourne, seven pharmacies will be included in each arm and each will be consenting 10 participants.

Recruitment of pharmacies and study set-up are progressing well and it's likely that the first pharmacy will be recruiting participants by mid to late August.

For more information contact Minh, [minh.pham@burnet.edu.au](mailto:minh.pham@burnet.edu.au).