

## EMPOWERING CONSCIOUS HEALTH CONSUMERS IN AN CHANGING TREATMENT LANDSCAPE

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**Introduction:** The rapidly changing treatment landscape in Australia has led to renewed interest and engagement opportunities with people who have been living with hepatitis C for many years and who have delayed interferon-based hepatitis C treatment. This increased visibility provides an excellent opportunity to reengage with this demographic around active and informed health-seeking behaviour and the Living Well program has been making significant strides in encouraging empowered health consumers, especially within alcohol and other drug settings.

**Methods:** Through the examples and experiences of our peer-facilitators emphasis is placed on the belief that those who live with hepatitis C are, in fact, the experts on living with hepatitis and so efforts are made to draw on their existing knowledge and skills. Living Well aims to bring people living with hepatitis C to a point where they can make informed decisions on their health and life of their own accord which is the crux of self-management.

**Results:** As a result of the Living Well program participants are seen to be using the knowledge, skills, resources, confidence and motivation strengthened by the program to actively engage in managing their health and hepatitis. The end result is people living with hep C who are much more conscious health consumers able to make informed decisions around whether to go onto current treatment or defer and maintain good health practices until new treatments are available.

**Conclusion:** The use of a peer-led model to deliver self-management principles to people living with hepatitis C and experience of injecting drug use is a highly effective strategy for creating more empowered health consumers among a group that traditionally faces many barriers to engaging with the health system.

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