



Hepatitis C treatment access via a community drug treatment service

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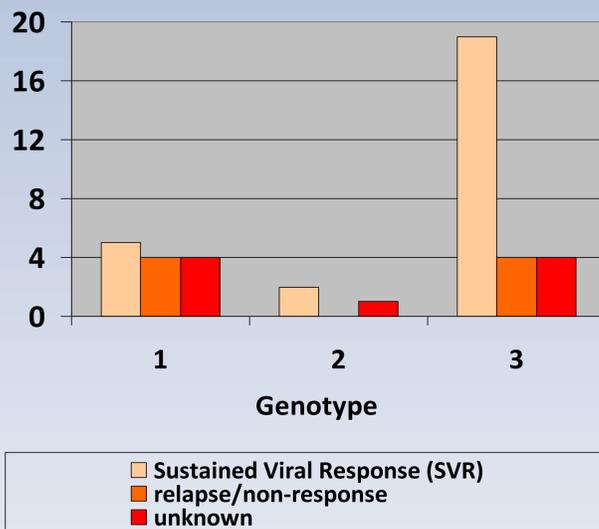
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A number of barriers are known to limit hepatitis C treatment uptake by people who inject drugs. In response to this, the WA Department of Health's Communicable Disease Control Directorate provided assistance for Next Step to establish a specialty hepatitis treatment clinic within its community-based drug & alcohol treatment service. The clinic's mission is to achieve objectives set out in the *Fourth National Hepatitis C Strategy 2014-2017*, which include:

- increasing access to appropriate management and care for people with chronic hepatitis C
- reducing the burden of disease attributed to chronic hepatitis C.

- SVR Rates by genotype -

- Geno 1 **38.5%** (5/13)
- Geno 2 **66.7%** (2/3)
- Geno 3 **70.3%** (19/27)



- Access Benefits -

Feedback from patients about the option of accessing hepatitis C treatment through their community drug treatment service has been positive. Some specific points that have been identified are:

Patient

1. Improved patient knowledge & awareness
2. More familiar & comfortable with surroundings
3. Consistency of staff
4. Less fear of discrimination
5. Easier communication with treatment service

Provider

1. Improved provider knowledge & awareness
2. Reduced wait times
3. Better familiarity with patient comorbidities
4. Injecting drug use less of a barrier to treatment



Barriers to treatment remain and prevent higher rates of hepatitis C treatment uptake amongst patients of the service. These include factors such as:

1. Financial stressors/need to work
2. Length of treatment (note rate of non-compliance in genotype 1's)
3. Fear of side effects (value placed on stories from peers)
4. Lack of testing (eg. patient unwilling or has not been offered)
5. Lack of knowledge and/or concern

In addition, a proportion of patients will still be unsuitable for treatment at particular times secondary to chaotic life circumstances, psychiatric instability and other factors

- Summary -

1. Treatment in a community drug & alcohol setting can be successful
2. Barriers remain that prevent high levels of treatment uptake
3. Non-compliance & disengagement from treatment remain significant problems, especially for longer treatment protocols

- Completion of treatment -

