

THE AUSTRALIAN RESPONSE AND UPTAKE OF THE NEW SUBSIDISED HEPATITIS C DIRECT ACTING ANTI-VIRALS AMONG THE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS

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Background: In December 2015, the Australian government announced a \$AUD1 billion investment to make new generation treatment for Hepatitis C available and accessible to the community. Prior to this announcement, the uptake of hepatitis C treatments was very low, approximately 1%. Access to treatment involved engagement with specialist clinicians and medication dispensed only through specific pharmacies. These challenges were in addition to the severe side-effects associated with that treatment, along with the acute stigma and discrimination experienced by people who use drugs. The outcomes of which were a crisis: increased mortality, morbidity, and new infections. And yet central to this extraordinary reform announcement have been the voices of people who use drugs. This paper will examine how community mobilisation of those directly affected, PWID helped to achieved this reform. Alongside this we will discuss the importance of this continued government support for peer based drug user organisations who will play a crucial role in the implementation of accessible direct acting antivirals.

Methods: Narrative description of community mobilisation and outcomes. Analysis of treatment data prior to the availability of DAA and after. Impact analysis of the role of peer based responses to support DAA implementation

Results: Policy reform and government investment in DAA. People who use drugs in Australia being supported to provide the consultation, advocacy, leadership and service delivery that supports the implementation of this reform.

Conclusion: This paper will showcase the importance of peer based drug user organising in supporting governments to make decisions around treatment and the education of our community (people who inject drugs) to become involved in this process. In addition to the availability of new treatments, this paper will also discuss the community infrastructure required to make such reforms successful.