

## CAIRNS HEP C FREE BY 2020

Bassett FM<sup>1</sup>, Gorton CZ<sup>1</sup>, Russell DR<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Lewis RM<sup>1</sup>

1. Cairns Sexual health
2. The University of Melbourne
3. James Cook University

**Background:** The availability of direct acting antivirals to treat hepatitis C (HCV) has raised the possibility of elimination of HCV if enough clients within a population can be treated to reduce new infections.

We estimate that 1,500 people are living with chronic hepatitis C in the Cairns region. To cope with the demand for treatment and to achieve the public health benefits of expanded treatment primary and community health services have been engaged.

**Methods:** To achieve the goal of Cairns Hep C Free by 2020 a program of education, training and support has been implemented to increase the number of treatment sites. This involved purchasing a mobile Fibroscan machine, engaging with Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) staff and clients who shaped the campaign messaging and developing nurse led models of care.

Cairns Sexual Health has provided clinician education at nine General Practice sites and three hospitals. 230 health professionals attended our training day on March 4 which focused on HCV treatment.

**Results:** From March 1 to April 30 approximately 160 people commenced HCV treatment in the Cairns region including clients at the hospital Liver Clinic, Opioid Substitution Therapy clients, inmates at Lotus Glen prison, people who inject drugs and clients accessing treatment at Cairns Sexual Health Service or via their local General Practitioner. Prior to March 2016 approximately 70 to 100 clients were treated per annum. We will be able to report on data up until August 30, 2016.

**Conclusion:** A broad based response to the PBS listing of the new HCV medications can be implemented in a regional setting with engagement of stakeholders across the specialist services, community and primary health care spectrum. An approach which is client centred and enables a range of access points has been undertaken with emphasis on capacity building and community engagement.