

An evaluation of active follow-up for hepatitis C notifications in Perth

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Introduction:

The hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment rate has declined in recent years and likely remains short of what is required for HCV elimination in Australia by 2030. To address this issue, Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control (MCDC) piloted active public health follow-up of HCV notifications in Perth.

Objectives:

To assess the impact and cost effectiveness for the active follow-up of HCV notifications.

Methodology:

HCV notifications received between January and June 2023 were reviewed. Notifications that had a positive or incomplete HCV RNA test were investigated to assess testing and treatment status as a pre-intervention baseline. The intervention involved linking eligible patients that did not have an HCV RNA test, or had not commenced treatment. HCV RNA testing rates and HCV treatment rates were compared before and after active follow-up.

Results:

A total of 209 notifications were reviewed between January and June 2023. MCDC increased HCV RNA testing rates from 82% to 92% ($p < 0.01$) and treatment rates from 79% to 85% ($p < 0.01$). MCDC helped 11 people start treatment at an estimated cost of \$3 500 dollars per QALY gained. If continued for the remainder of 2023, active follow-up could increase treatment rates of people living with HCV from an estimated 51% to 60%, pushing Perth closer to the national target of 65%.

Discussion:

These results suggest that PHUs can play an important role in tracking and sustaining momentum towards HCV elimination, and that active follow-up of HCV notifications could be a highly cost-effective public health initiative, especially as Australia moves closer towards HCV elimination.