

EFFECTIVE LINKAGE TO TREATMENT FOR PEOPLE WHO USE SUBSTANCES

HepNS: Curbing hepatitis C transmission through effective linkage of people who inject substances to treatment in Nova Scotia, Canada

BONN, M¹

¹ Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia, Canada

BACKGROUND

Every year Nova Scotia has approximately 300 new diagnoses of HCV. People who use substances (PWUS) are at the highest risk of contracting Hepatitis C (HCV). The mission of HepNS is to reduce the stigma surrounding HCV, educate PWUS on preventive measures and link people who have HCV to care.

The desired outcomes of HepNS programming include: Increase knowledge and awareness of risk factors with the hepatitis virus, increase uptake of personal behaviour that prevent the transmission of HCV amongst substance users, strengthened capacity of priority populations and audiences to prevent infection and improve health outcomes, enhanced application of knowledge in community based organizations and increased uptake of overall behaviour that prevent transmission of Hepatitis C.

MODEL DESCRIPTION

Through a PHAC grant, model implementation began in 2017 to provide education, peer support & practical assistance to PWIS seeking care for HCV.

In 2019, HepNS was provided a community based AbbVie grant for transportation and outreach. In a region where transportation is often a barrier to HCV testing and care, which is sensitive to PWUS, this HepNS program helps remove that barrier. By accompanying the client every step of the way, there is a higher chance of them following through with the suggested treatment plan.

EFFECTIVENESS

As part of the PHAC project, a total of 21 educational workshops & 4 events occurred in 2018-2019 in 4 regions of the province for PWUS. The program seeks to achieve 20% of PWUS accessing the program to remain engaged in care over the next 6 months.

By providing supports such as transportation assistance, connection to HCV specialists for treatment, appointment reminders, and one to one peer support, we increase the chances of effective linkage of successful care.

JAN-MAR 2019 DATA COLLECTION OF THE PHAC PROJECT

Of the 32 injection users, 100% of them stated they know more about protecting themselves from STBBI's.

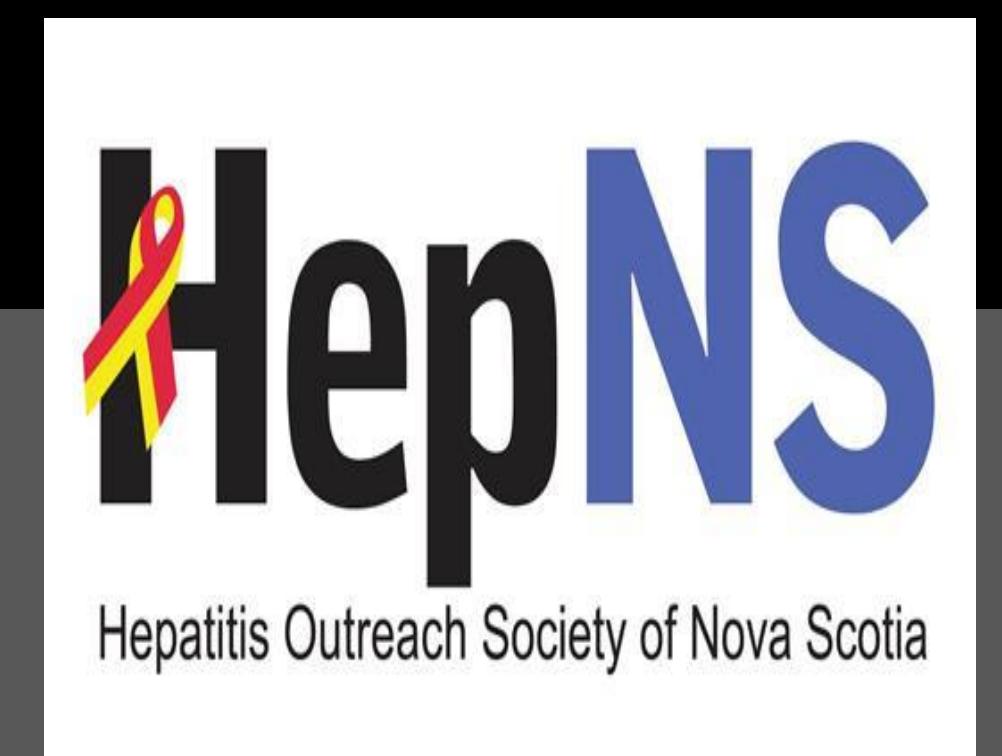
Of the 32 injection users, 100% of them stated they understood that there is stigma and discrimination amongst Hepatitis C.

Of the 32 injection users, 93.8% of them stated they plan on taking steps to protect themselves.

Of the 32 injection users, 96.9% of them stated they knew where to get additional information and support for Hepatitis C.

NEXT STEPS

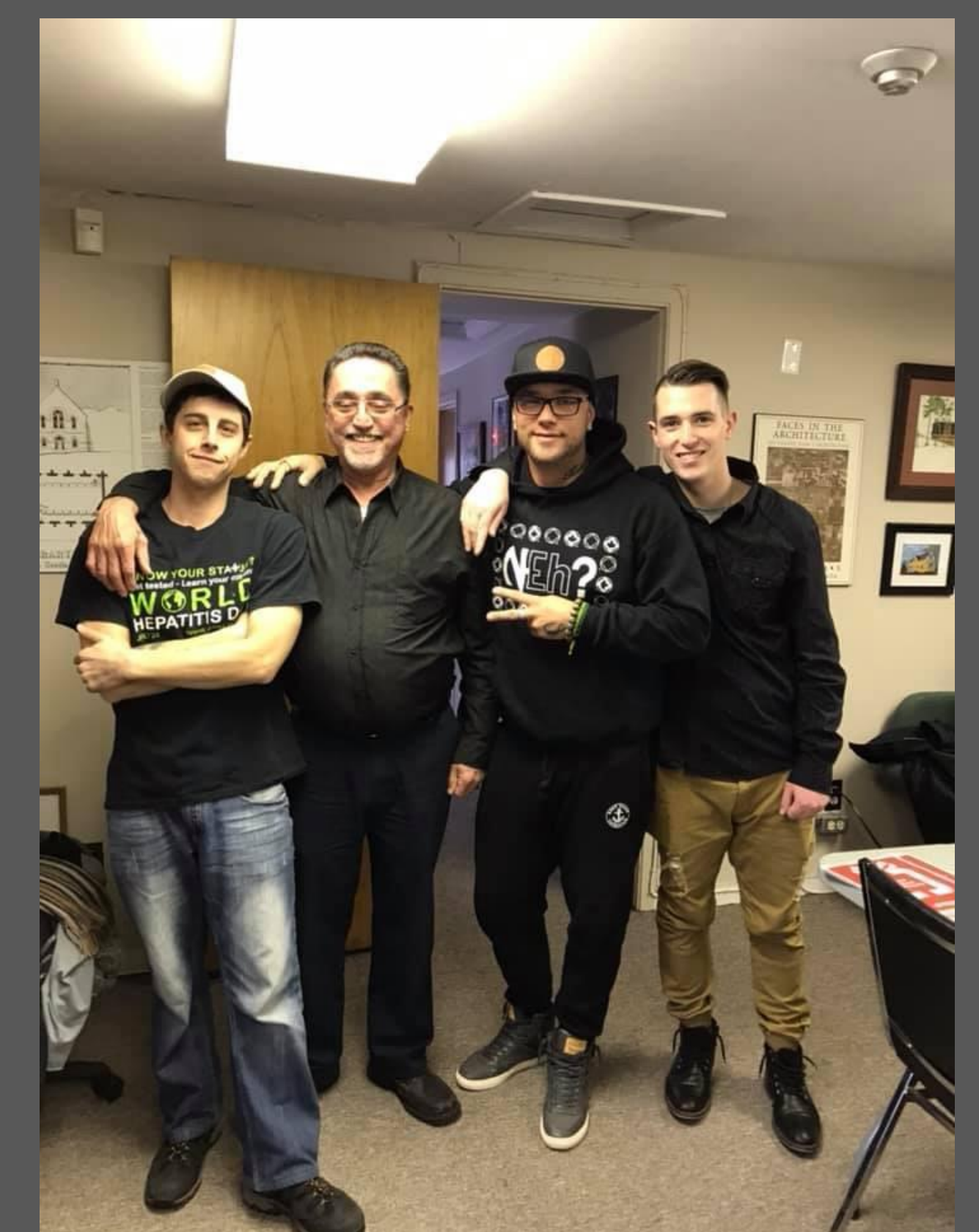
Ongoing educational sessions and events will continue to engage PWUS. The number of persons engaged, the type of supports needed by the client, and the achievement of goals along the HCV cascade of care will be tracked. By removing the barrier of transportation, we hope to make treatment more accessible for PWUS. HepNS will continue to connect with other NGO's to connect with PWIS who want treatment but need support along the way. It is hoped the travel program will increase the number of PWUS cured of HCV.



Our Outreach Worker sharing his lived experience with substance use & HCV.



The Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia, Canada.



Some of the Peers trained through HepNS to share their story.