

LIBERATING MEDECO-INALA FROM HEP C. A STUDY OF MICRO-ELIMINATION IN PRIMARY CARE

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Background:

Medeco-Inala is a six doctor General Practice in a low socio-economic area, encountering many social problems especially substance abuse with 234 patients enrolled in Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST). Inala has the highest rate of Hepatitis C by post code in Australia. We aimed to "*think national, act local*" by micro-elimination of Hepatitis C in primary care.

Approach:

Screening 40 Hepatitis C patients, the vast majority preferred treatment through their General Practitioner (GP). Key factors cited included: costs (private specialists, transport and parking at hospitals), judgemental attitudes encountered in hospitals, familiarity and trust with GPs and staff, geographic and parking convenience and less delay.

In 2016 our team undertook to eradicate Hep C from our Practice using a committed team approach. Defining goals and motivations for the project to all team members ensured solid commitment from receptionists, managers, nurses and doctors.

Publicizing the project required waiting room posters advertising new cures available for Hepatitis C. Patients were encouraged to make enquiries with their GP.

GPs were upskilled regarding risk factors, screening, new pharmaceutical regimes and pre-requisite investigations.

For patients with AST to Platelet Ratio Index scores over 1.0, we further investigated for cirrhosis with a fibro-scanner that visits our suburb monthly.

Patients are encouraged to "bring a friend" for testing and to help, "spread the cure not the disease".

Outcome:

Of our Practice's 234 OST patients, 234 have been screened, 176 diagnosed, 38 resolved infections spontaneously, 151 started treatment, and 148 cured. This translates into 45 cases of cirrhosis and 9 hepato-cellular carcinomas prevented.

Conclusion:

Our study shows the primary care setting is ideal for eliminating Hepatitis C. Educating GPs and staff members ensures all parties buy into the project. Waiting room advertising, proactive screening and encouraging patients to "*bring a friend*" are valuable elements. Our model is readily reproducible in all General Practices.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No external sources of income have been received to fund the Medeco-Inala project.

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