



NATIONAL AUSTRALIAN HEPATITIS C POINT-OF-CARE TESTING PROGRAM SUMMARY FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATIONS

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HCVPOCT

National Australian Hepatitis C Point-of-Care Testing Program

BACKGROUND

The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney and the International Centre for Point-of-Care testing at Flinders University have been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health to establish a National Australian Hepatitis C Point-of-Care Testing Program, consisting of a network of sites to scale up point-of-care HCV testing in settings providing services to people at high risk of acquiring HCV infection.

The national program will establish an observational cohort to evaluate whether scale-up of finger-stick point-of-care HCV testing increases diagnosis and treatment uptake for HCV infection. Unlike traditional HCV testing that requires several visits, this program will allow participants to obtain results within an hour and potentially start treatment the same day.

WHERE WILL THE DEVICES BE LOCATED?



GeneXpert devices will be provided to at least 65 study sites across Australia. We are consulting with state and territory governments, Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations and peak bodies across Australia to work out the best locations for these. The sites will be selected in a way in order to obtain equitable distribution of devices across healthcare jurisdictions.

WHO CAN DO HCV POINT-OF-CARE TESTING?

Aboriginal health workers/practitioners, nurses and doctors can all be trained to conduct HCV point-of-care testing on the GeneXpert. Training will mostly be provided remotely using web-based videoconference and/or teleconference systems. It will take approximately 2 hours. A series of step-by-step reference posters will be provided. Following training, all trainees will need to complete a written and practical test to make sure they understand all the necessary processes to do HCV point-of-care testing on the GeneXpert.





IS IT SAFE?



HCV point-of-care testing will follow national infection control and point-of-care guidelines. The point-of-care test is simple to use and is designed to reduce any risk of onwards transmission of HCV to health care workers. The provided point-of-care training will emphasise procedures to protect test operators, including the correct use of personal protective equipment and how to manage and report waste, cleaning and spills.

BENEFIT TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY

As part of this project, we have included funding for a 0.5 FTE Aboriginal Health worker for two years who will work in across our program and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Program at the Kirby Institute to build capacity on HCV point-of-care testing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Funding for a **0.5 FTE**
Aboriginal Health worker
for **2 years**



Additionally, this program aims to bring about the following benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:

- Development of a tailored program to improve HCV testing and treatment;
- Enhancing HCV testing and treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Improving access to HCV testing and treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Strengthened collaborations between service providers and community organisations;
- Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in active management of HCV.

MAINTENANCE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GOVERNANCE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

This program has consulted and partnered with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) from the outset and provided advice to ensure that this research is being conducted in a culturally appropriate manner. Additionally, this study is seeking approvals from relevant Aboriginal Human Research Ethics Committees including: AH&MRC (Ref: 1853/21) and SA AHREC (Ref: 04-21-943).

Ongoing community consultations with an Aboriginal Reference Group will take place. The Aboriginal Reference Group includes representation from health workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. The group will meet with researchers every six months for the duration of the project. Members of the Aboriginal Reference Group will provide guidance and direction over the proposed research focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including research design, ownership of data, data interpretation, ethics, and cultural issues specific to the conduct of research and publication of research findings.





WHAT IF OUR HEALTH SERVICE WANTS TO TAKE PART?

Phase 1 sites for the program have been selected. We will be launching an expression of interest for phase 2 sites to join the program in November 2021.

Expressions of interest applications will be circulated to potential sites and advertised broadly. These will be assessed by an independent panel of reviewers. Criteria that will be taken into consideration includes HCV prevalence at the site, equitable distribution across jurisdictions, regionality, and engagement with jurisdictions regarding priority services and service gaps.

Health services will also undergo a site assessment procedure to make sure they are suitable for HCV point-of-care testing. This will be done via an online survey. Suitable services will need to:

- Have adequate space for storage of the machine (16 x 30 x 30cm), cartridges and laptop;
- Have appropriate infectious waste disposal in place for items that could be contaminated;
- Employ a healthcare professional (Aboriginal health worker/practitioner, nurse and/or doctor) who will be trained to do the HCV point-of-care testing on the GeneXpert. Up to 4 operators can be trained per site.

WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE PROVIDED?



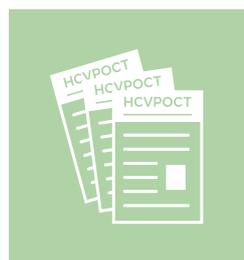
GeneXpert
– 4 modules



Laptop for connectivity
to the GeneXpert
device



- HCV RNA GeneXpert cartridges
- HCV Ab point-of-care tests (Research use only - not TGA approved)
- HIV-1/2 Ag/Ab and HBsAg tests (for HCV RNA positive participants)



Operator training
and training resource
package



- Ongoing support from the program for set-up and testing
- Helpdesk for ongoing technical and troubleshooting support
- Support with reporting testing data to the health department

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

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