

THE NSW DRIED BLOOD SPOT TESTING PILOT



AN ESSENTIAL PERSON-CENTRED OPTION TO IMPROVE HEPATITIS C AND HIV TESTING

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- **130,000¹** people are living with hepatitis C infection
 - **29,000²** people are living with HIV infection
 - **2,610³** people were living with undiagnosed HIV infection in 2020
- Australia needs to increase testing to achieve World Health Organization's 2030 hepatitis C and HIV elimination goals
 - Testing barriers include stigma and discrimination, limited access to services, off-site pathology, language, and culture



WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

With testing and treatment both decreasing, we urgently need testing models that are flexible and person-centred. Dried blood spot (DBS) testing is a safe, private, and confidential solution.



Simple finger prick test



Reduces number of visits for diagnosis, improving linkage to care



Performed at home (dbstest.health.nsw.gov.au) or via health services



DBS testing is ideal for prisons as it can test large populations quickly, with limited clinical space



Results delivered via phone or in person

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE NSW DBS TESTING PILOT (Nov 2016 - Dec 2020)



10,000+ registrations for a DBS test



64% of online registrations returned a sample to the lab for testing



8,696 tests completed



29% of people tested were from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds



7,392 unique people tested



TAKE HOME KITS

DBS home testing offered a viable testing alternative during COVID-19 lockdowns

HEPATITIS C & HIV KEY OUTCOMES



TESTS COMPLETED

6,573 Hepatitis C
8,600+ HIV



UNIQUE PEOPLE TESTED

5,960 Hepatitis C
6,922 HIV



PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE TESTED WHO HAD NOT TESTED IN TWO YEARS PRIOR

45% Hepatitis C
51% HIV



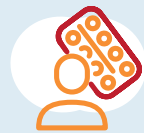
878 active hepatitis C infections
10 new HIV infections



15% returned a positive hepatitis C RNA result

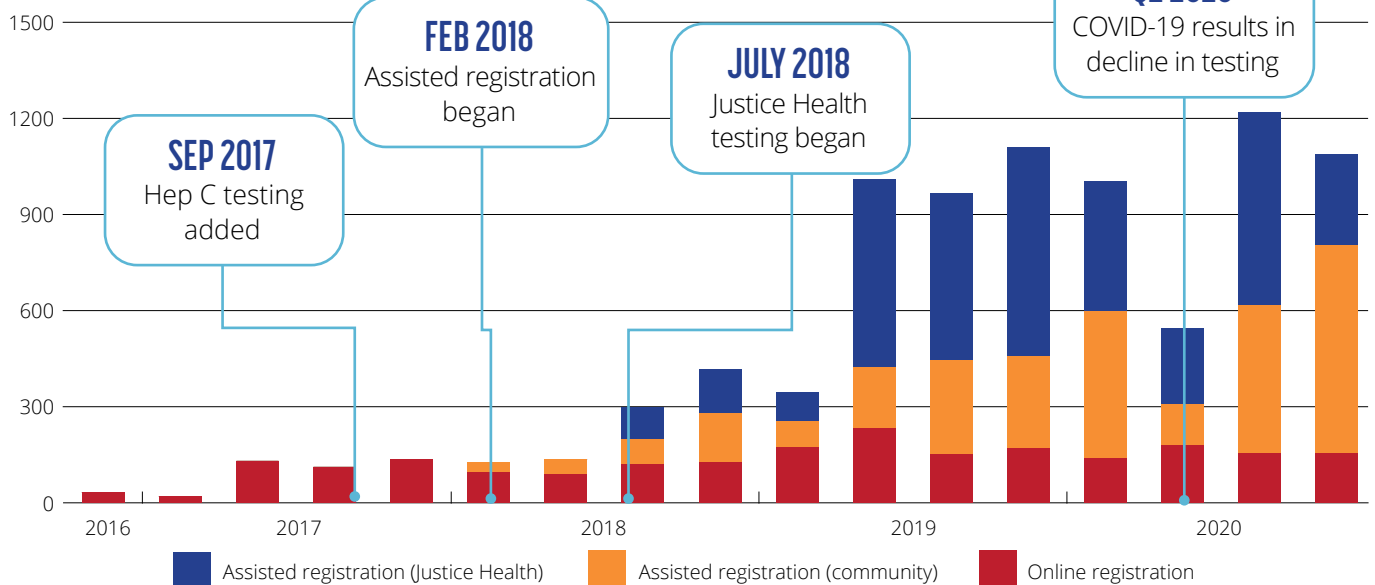


45% of people diagnosed with hepatitis C initiated treatment within six months



61% of people in prison diagnosed with hepatitis C initiated treatment within six months

TESTING OVER TIME



KEY POINTS

- DBS testing can reach people who may not have tested in a traditional setting
- High return rate for people registering online
- In prisons, DBS allows large numbers of people to be tested and reduces burden on staff
- Study and site staff supported linkage to care, so that 45% of people with a positive hepatitis C result initiated treatment within six months
- DBS testing was an important strategy when traditional health services were not available due to COVID-19



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocacy is urgently required to encourage diagnostic companies to register DBS with the TGA
- Ensure the national HIV and HCV strategies include innovative/non-traditional testing methods to increase testing and national and WHO elimination goals can be met



1. Kwon, et al. Australia Could Miss the WHO Hepatitis C Virus Elimination Targets Due to Declining Treatment Uptake and Ongoing Burden of Advanced Liver Disease Complications. PLOS ONE 2021;16(9): e0257369 - 130,000 people are living with hepatitis C infection 2 & 3. The Kirby Institute. HIV, hepatitis and STIs in Australia National surveillance data website (2020) <https://data.kirby.unsw.edu.au/> [last accessed: 23 February 2022] - 29,002 people are living with HIV infection and 2,610 people were living with undiagnosed HIV infection in 2020

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