



## MEDIA RELEASE

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, 16 February 2023

# New hepatitis C program aims to help General Practice staff locate cases and achieve Australia's goal to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030

- With Australia lagging in its goal of eliminating hepatitis C by 2030, *Beyond the C* is helping Australia increase testing and treatment by providing primary care with vital hepatitis C case-finding tools.
- *Beyond the C* is part of the national hepatitis C project, the *50,000 Project*, which aims to find the estimated 50,000 people living with hepatitis C who have not accessed treatment, support or care.
- Australians working in general practice are encouraged to join *Beyond the C*, with incentives of up to \$1500 available.

A new national program aiming to help eliminate hepatitis C in Australia is calling GPs and other health professionals working in primary care to sign up and help locate the estimated 50,000 Australians who may be unaware they have the virus.

Following a successful pilot program, the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) has launched its partnership program, *Beyond the C*, as part of a national initiative to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030.

ASHM Chief Executive Officer Alexis Apostolellis said, “we know that increased testing is critical to eliminating hepatitis C, but testing is on the decline, with [reduced testing activity in 2020 and 2021 across ACCESS sites](#).”

“General Practice staff are at the frontline in helping identify those in the community with hepatitis C. This program is helping doctors and practices scale up their existing systems to identify patients and screen at-risk groups.

“*Beyond the C* assists General Practice staff with alternative search criteria for data extraction to identify patients with active hepatitis C and also provides ongoing education and resources to manage hepatitis C cases.

“The expansion of this program is also an important step in helping General Practice identify and manage other chronic diseases and conditions through broader application of the case finding and auditing techniques this program applies.”

Trial programs of *Beyond the C* run across Australia through select GP clinics in 2021 have shown this new program can deliver strong results.

[ashm.org.au](https://ashm.org.au)

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General Practitioner from Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, Dr Lakhbinder Kang, said *Beyond the C* allowed their practice to identify 400 patients with hepatitis C, thanks to the case-finding support.

“*Beyond the C* provided a structured supportive auditing process to focus on treating hepatitis C. As of February 2023, our treatment rate is 83 percent,” said Kang.

Quinns Mindarie Super Clinic Clinical Manager, Heather Drummond, said *Beyond the C* helped their clinic to diagnose 47 additional patients.

Ms Drummond said the program also helped better educate their clinicians on hepatitis C management.

“Identifying and treating patients for a disease is a rewarding population health activity. It has also been rewarding to upskill our clinical team around the management of hepatitis C and to see how this has been embedded in our practice,” said Drummond.

“I’m passionate about health promotion. And now, with a new medicine that can not only treat, but cure hepatitis C in the majority of cases, we just need more people to get tested, especially those at risk of having hepatitis C. *Beyond the C* helps make this testing and screening process so much easier.”

Left untreated, hepatitis C infection can lead to the development of liver cancer and cirrhosis of the liver. Hepatitis C infection is the most common cause of liver disease requiring liver transplantation in Australia. This is despite significant advances in treatment options that have a 95 per cent efficacy in curing the disease.

ASHM is asking people working in general practice across Australia to join the *Beyond the C* program to help identify and support patients, improve their wellbeing and help us eliminate hepatitis C.

There is a \$1500 incentive for practices who complete the program.

Help us eliminate hepatitis C by 2030 by [signing up to Beyond the C today](#).

Clinics in Western Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory who participated in the trial are available for comment.

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