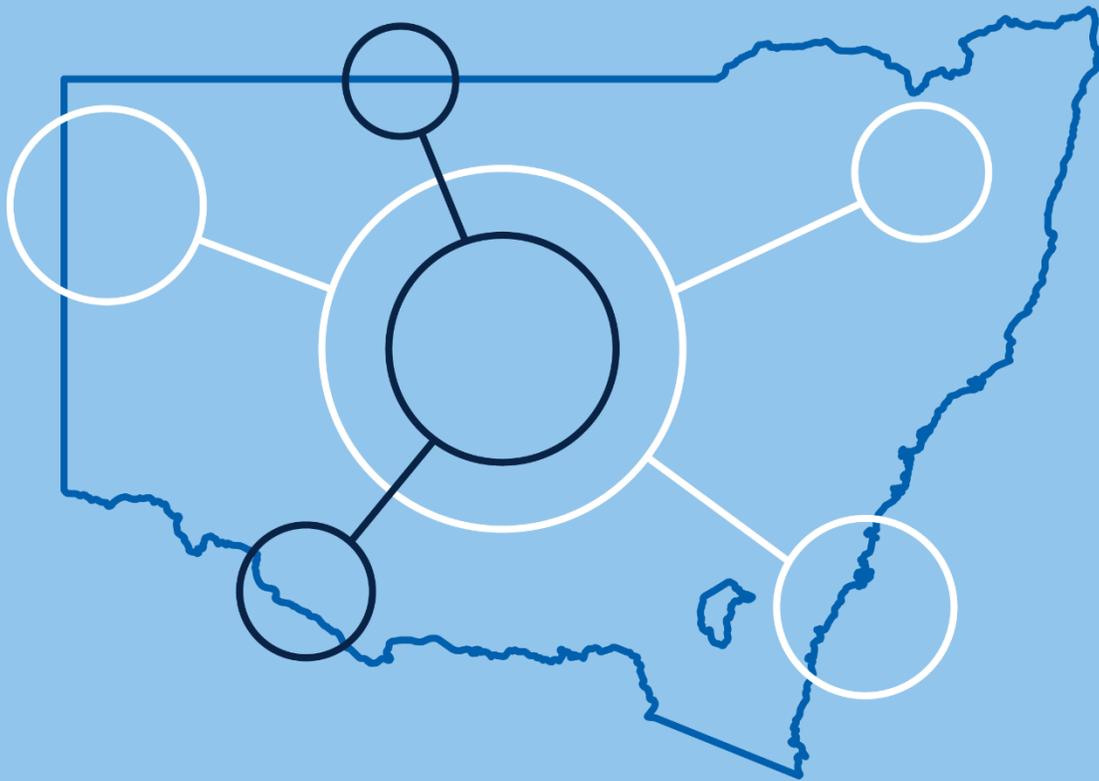


NSW Hepatitis C Remote Prescribing Program





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) is the peak organisation of health professionals in Australia and New Zealand who work in HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections. ASHM is a professional, not-for-profit, member-based organisation with expertise in:

- Workforce education across HIV, viral hepatitis and sexual health
- Clinical guideline and resource development to support best-practice care
- Policy and advocacy leadership in the sector
- Conferences for sector knowledge sharing, learning and networking

To reach the World Health Organisation hepatitis C virus (HCV) elimination targets by 2030 will require increased screening and diagnosis, upskilling of the clinical workforce and innovative models of care to provide Direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy in hard-to-reach populations and remote areas.

Background to the program

In mid-2020, ASHM was funded by NSW Health to roll out a program to facilitate linkages between nurses and hepatitis C prescribers in regional areas. The program has since expanded to include other settings where access to hepatitis C assessment and treatment was limited.

This follows from a meeting ASHM convened on 1 April 2020 between interested nurses, medical and nurse practitioners and NSW Health to investigate the feasibility of a program to increase access to hepatitis C treatment in regional NSW. At that meeting, participants discussed the practicalities and processes needed to roll out the program.

Program resources

Participants agreed the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA) Remote Consultation Request Form could be adapted for the program to facilitate the exchange of clinical information between the nurses who perform the initial HCV assessment and patient work-up then refer to prescribers who review the information and initiate DAA therapy).

A flow chart summarising the key roles and responsibilities of nurse referrers and prescribers was subsequently developed.

These forms are downloadable from the ASHM website at: <https://www.ashm.org.au/hcv/nsw-hepatitis-c-remote-prescribing-program/>. This webpage will be expanded as the program evolves to include a map of NSW with locations of prescribers (medical practitioners and authorised nurse practitioners).

Program participation

The program was formally initiated on 1 November 2020. There are currently 9 prescribers (comprising 6 medical practitioners and 3 nurse practitioners), and 16 nurses participating in the program.

A steering committee was established in late 2021 to provide advice and guide the program moving forward.

It is anticipated the network of nurse referrers and prescribers in NSW regional areas and other settings will grow over time and access to DAA therapy in NSW is increased.

Monitoring the program

To monitor the program, ASHM facilitates quarterly network meetings where progress can be discussed, and any issues identified can be resolved. Participants are also invited to provide an individual update.

A data collection spreadsheet was developed to monitor the program. This spreadsheet will be shared via email between the nurse referrer and linked prescriber to complete their relevant columns. ASHM will collate these forms on a quarterly basis for monitoring and reporting purposes.

This form records the patient identifier code, numbers of patients that were assessed, suitable for remote consult, referred to a prescriber and initiated on treatment, SVR result, patient setting, and a comment field to record other key information, e.g. if patient contact or further assessment was required.

How to join the program

Medical practitioners, authorised nurse practitioners and nurses in a variety of settings in NSW including primary care, community health, outreach programs and hospital settings are invited to join the program.

All medical practitioners and authorised nurse practitioners experienced in hepatitis C treatment can prescribe DAA therapy for patients who meet the [General Statement for Drugs for the Treatment of Hepatitis C](#).

Practitioners not yet experienced in hepatitis C treatment can have their proposed treatment reviewed and approved by a specialist using the online [REACH-C form](#). They can also email education@ashm.org.au for details of relevant hepatitis C training and online courses that are targeted to prescribing practitioners.

Interested nurses not yet experienced in hepatitis C assessment can email education@ashm.org.au to provide them with details of the next available Hepatitis C Nursing Courses and relevant eLearning available.

Medical practitioners, authorised nurse practitioners and nurses interested in joining the program are invited to complete an Expression of Interest Form by emailing the program coordinator at NSWLinkages@ashm.org.au.

More information

For more information about the program, please email the program coordinator at NSWLinkages@ashm.org.au.