

# INTERVIEW WITH WASUA'S NURSE PRACTITIONER, LEANNE



Leanne has been working as WASUA's Nurse since December 2015. Leanne is an endorsed Nurse Practitioner with nearly two decades of specialised experience in viral hepatitis and advanced liver disease. She is a proactive team leader and problem solver with extensive experience working with public hospitals and other agencies. WASUA is privileged to have such an experienced Nurse Practitioner running our health clinic 3 days a week.

Interview conducted and article written by Gari-Emma Perry

## *1. Can you explain how WASUA's peer based community hepatitis C treatment model works?*

The WASUA peer based community treatment model offers consumers a simpler and easier way to access information and services. Initially, peer based information is provided to consumers; consumers are then referred to the clinic where pre-treatment assessment, on-going treatment management, and post treatment follow up is conducted at one place. During this process, consumers engage with WASUA's peer worker who is able to make the process of engagement easier. This peer-facilitated case-management is an essential component of WASUA's treatment model.

The clinic offers a range of services and helps to reduce the barriers faced by consumers when accessing health services by providing flexibility and better access for the patient. In the end, we are hoping that treatment will provide a point of connectedness between the consumers and the service, to engage consumers with other health services where appropriate, and to reduce felt and enacted stigma and discrimination.

## *2. How do you engage with IV drug users?*

It is very important to provide a service that is a one-stop-shop, where people can access a range of services at the same time. In this instance, many patients are referred to the health clinic after they have accessed needles and syringes. We have streamlined the hepatitis C treatment program; this means that people can have their bloods taken here and pick up their medications at the same time. Treatment can be initiated in-house, the patient is not required to attend a pharmacy to pick up their medication, and there is no cost to those patients who have concession cards.

It is also really important to be aware of the stigma and discrimination surrounding injecting drug use. As health professionals we need to remember that people who inject drugs have

often had negative experiences with healthcare providers, therefore they are often fearful or reluctant to engage with health services. Another thing to remember is that not every health issue will link back to the person's drug use.

### 3. Could you explain the importance of the peer worker role?

WASUA's peer worker roles are vitally important for all clients attending WASUA. Peer workers at the Needle & Syringe Exchange Program (NSEP) desk have all been educated about hepatitis C and provide current information to clients. So, the NSEP is pivotal in recruiting patients for the health clinic and also in providing information to consumers. Co-locating the clinic in the NSEP building makes accessing treatment as easy as possible.

We have a number of peer workers who have completed the new treatments. Consumers who are considering treatment can have a chat with these workers regarding their experience. We also have a case management outreach worker who works very closely with patients and provides follow up in the terms of phone calls and visits, and if required will assist the patient

in attending the clinic and attending blood tests or other medical appointments.

Trust is also a big issue for injecting drug users. When any consumer walks through our door they are greeted by someone who understands them, who doesn't judge them, and accepts them as they are.

### 4. In relation to hepatitis C treatment, What works well at WASUA?

I think there are a few factors that contribute to why patients engage with certain services. I think it is important for a service to be responsive to the patient needs and as the patients' needs change, the service must adapt accordingly. Having peer workers work alongside or work with the consumers is essential. WASUA offers a multitude of other services which engage with consumers before they access the health clinic, and this is an integral component of the community peer based service model. WASUA's peer and outreach workers are doing the work of engaging effectively with consumers, and it is this established and ongoing relationship that is essential in forming trust.

**PERTH**  
(08) 9325 8387  
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**SOUTH WEST**  
Van Phone 0418 739 372  
Office (08) 9791 6699

**Perth NSEP**  
Mon - Weds: 10am-5pm  
Thurs - Fri: 10am-8pm  
Sat & Sun: 11am-4pm

**Clinic Hours**  
Tues: 10:30am - 1pm & 2pm- 4:30pm  
Wed: 12pm - 4pm  
Thurs: 10:30am - 1pm & 2pm- 4:30pm  
Closed Public Holidays

WASUA provides a number of services on premises at **22/7 Aberdeen St, Perth WA 6000**, including:

- NSEP (Needle and Syringe Exchange Program)
- Free hep A and B vaccinations for hepatitis C positive people
- Free blood testing in a friendly confidential environment
- Drug treatment support and referral
- Peer education and training
- Street-based outreach
- Advocacy and support for users
- Safe injecting and safe disposal education and resources
- Hepatitis C/blood borne virus information and resources

97 Spencer St, Bunbury (entry via Rose st)  
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 10am - 3pm.

South West Mobile provides a mobile Needle Syringe Exchange Program (NSEP) at the following locations and times:

Margaret River	Tues: 3pm-4pm	Hospital Carpark
Busselton	Tues: 5pm-7pm	Hospital Carpark
Harvey	Weds: 1pm-2pm	Hospital Carpark
Collie	Weds: 3pm-4pm	Hospital Carpark
Manjimup	Thurs: 12pm-1pm	Hospital Carpark

- \* **FREE** equipment on exchangeable items
- \* **FREE** resources and helpful information

A confidential outreach service is also available throughout the southwest from Monday to Friday, for people who cannot attend the site locations.  
Phone **0418 739 372** to arrange a suitable time.