



The Impact of a Hep C Peer Support Group on Street IDUs

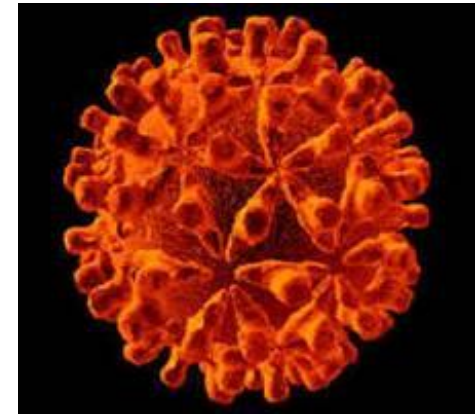
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What is Hepatitis C?

- **250,000** Canadians are infected with Hep C, over 1/3 are unaware
- **5000** new infections each year in Canada, with **1500** new infections in Toronto
- **80%** of people infected with develop chronic Hep C
- **70-80%** of our methadone clients have Hep C
- Treatment is available and will clear the virus in **42-82%** of patients



Why a Hepatitis C Group?

Drug users face stigma; many of them do not access adequate health care as a result!

Group Goals

- To reach and empower a marginalized / homeless population
- To enhance health by creating a holistic client centred mutually supportive group
- To increase Hep C knowledge, personal health choices, and access to healthcare and treatment using health promotion and prevention strategies

Group Formation

Time 10-weeks for 2 hours

Staffing 2 RNs and 1 peer facilitator

Membership 6-12 co-ed members with Hep C

Structure

- Closed, educationally oriented group
- Varied format: loosely structured
- Member-driven: upstream approach

Client Compensation 2 bus tokens, \$10, lunch

- **Assessing** group and individual needs
 - ie. Surveys, evaluations, discussions etc.
- **Program planning** – health promotion and prevention focused
- **Developing** nurse-client **relationships** and fostering relationships between group members
- **Advocating** and being a liason for our clients with community partners



Strengths

- Peer's knowledge and empathy about living conditions and context
- Provides short-term income and employment skills
- Peers have credibility, can be good role models and can recruit members
- Increased self-esteem, confidence, responsibility, public speaking skills

Limitations

- Conflicting identities as peer worker and IDU community member
- May violate worker/client boundaries
- Misunderstanding of roles of a peer worker by peer or staff

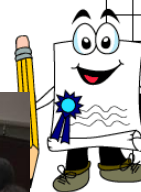
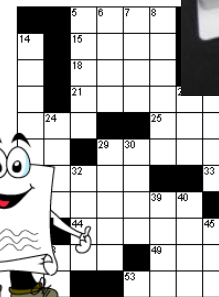
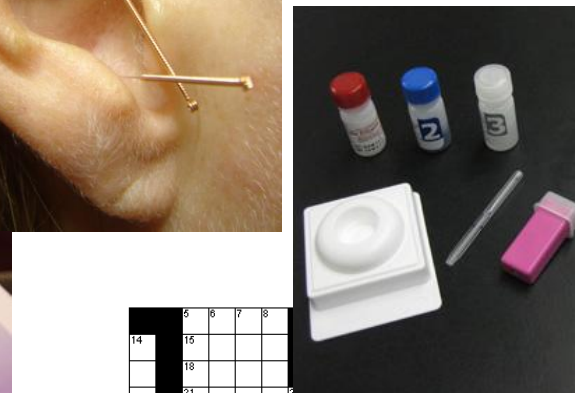
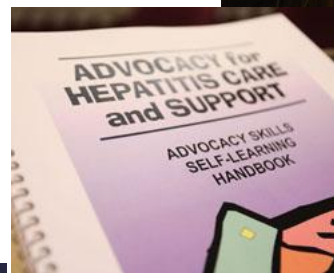
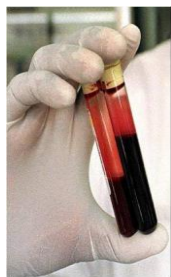
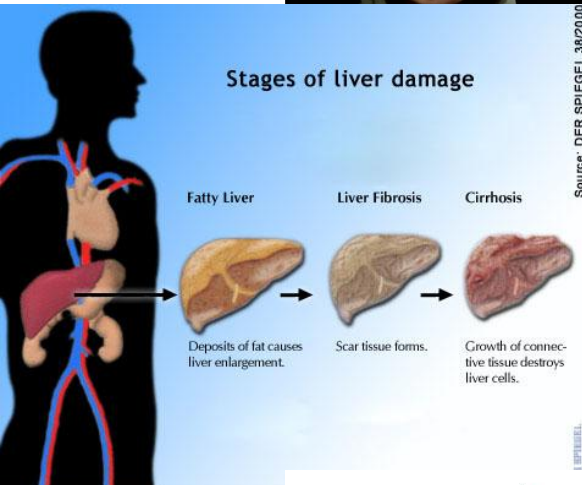
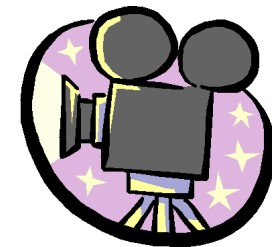
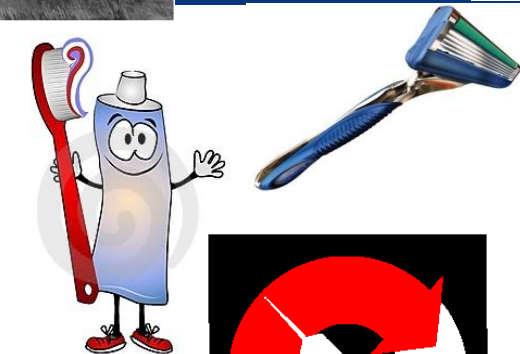
How to Find an Effective Balance?

Have reasonable expectations, respect peer limitations and be receptive of their ideas!

Program Activities

JEOPARDY!

Hep C



Challenges

Knowledge and Background

- Literacy levels and learning disabilities
- Varied background knowledge
- Challenging myths that group members perceive as truth

Group Dynamics

- Getting clients to engage and/or feel safe
- Resolving personality conflicts
- Clients not complying to group norms
- Working with people who are drunk or high
- Accommodating several smoking breaks

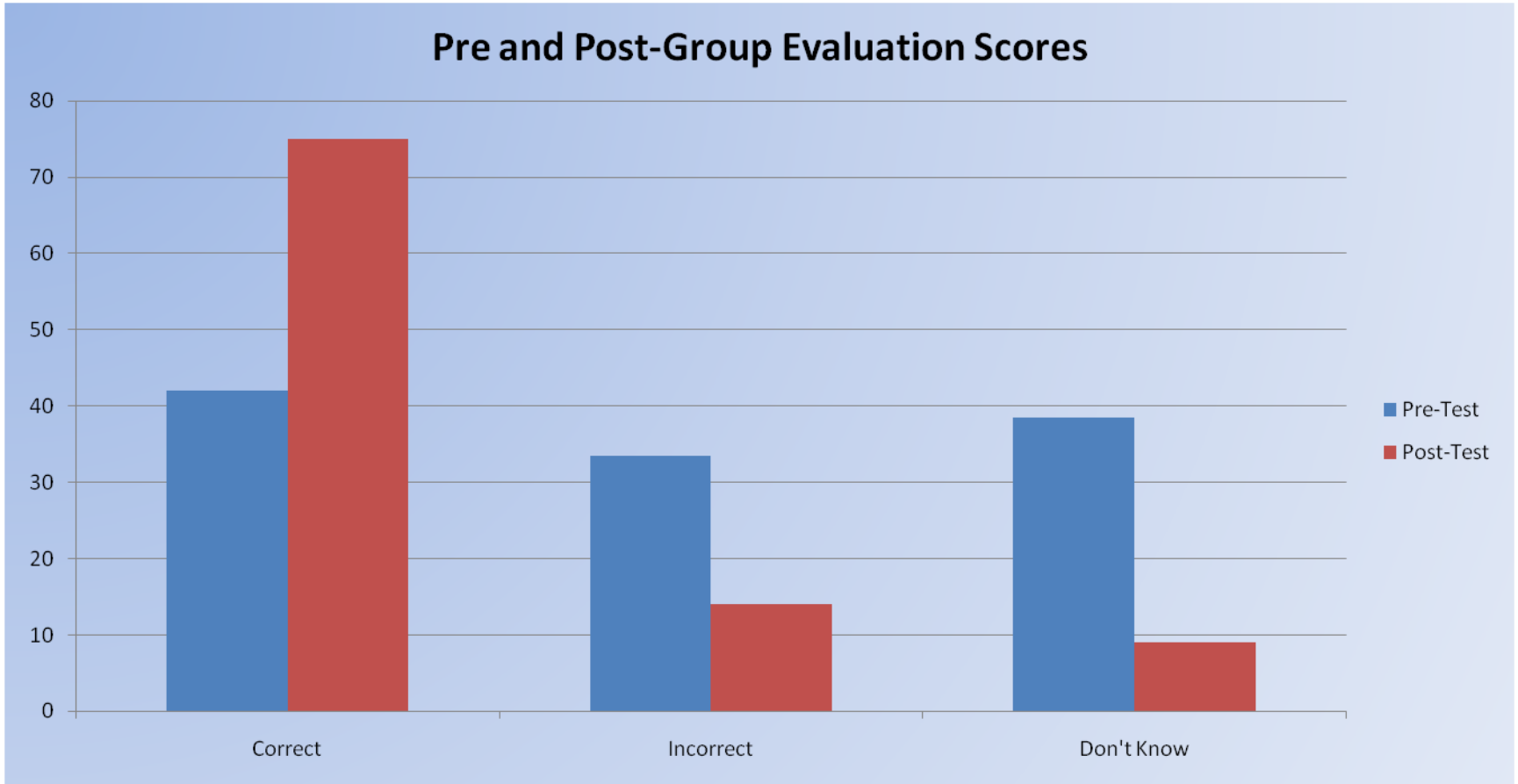
Members Are:

- Inspired and empowered to consider, prepare for, and/or enter treatment
- Enabled to make more informed health decisions and healthier choices

Members Have:

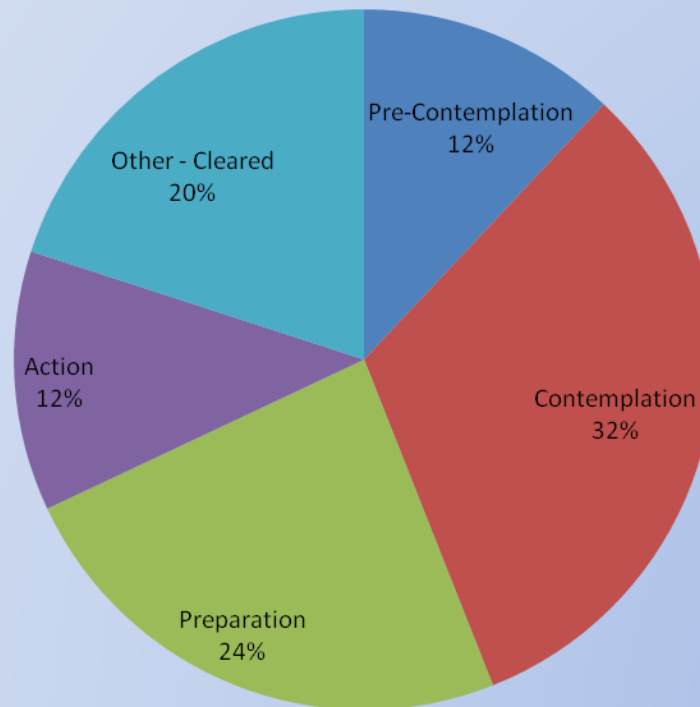
- Reduced barriers to accessing to health care
- Reduced drug related harms
- Decreased social isolation
- Skills to self-advocate

Outcome Measures



Outcome Measures

Clients Considering Treatment Post-Group



Outcome Client Quotes

- “The food was healthy... couldn’t stand it. But I know it was good for me. I am drinking a lot of water now and paying attention to what I eat. I only eat ice cream once a week now, as opposed to everyday”.
- “Treatment might be too hard – but info, like nutrition, are useful because I can make healthier choices and improve my Hep C and liver that way”
- “Healthy behaviour – lifestyle, eating habits, drug use, sleep – all the discussions really stuck in my mind”
- “Discussion groups to clarify what I know about the disease were best”

Working Within a Subculture

- Recognize the unique needs that may exist in a particular subculture
- Use a member of the subculture as a “peer” facilitator
- Compensate the peer facilitator appropriately
- Use a participatory approach where group members influence program planning, delivery and evaluation

Facilitation

- Group members may need additional motivation to come at first
- Focus on the person, not the behaviours
- Be prepared to hand-hold for awhile, as empowerment might not be immediately possible.

World Hepatitis Day Celebration

The 63rd World Health Assembly has recognized **July 28, 2011** as **World Hepatitis Day**

Purpose: to raise awareness and greater understanding of viral hepatitis

Campaign Theme: This is hepatitis...

Slogan: Know it. Confront it. Hepatitis affects everyone, everywhere

Questions?



References

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