BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

Australia invests $6.5 M for improving diagnosis of hepatitis C

September 21, 2021 | News

For funding a new national point-of-care testing (POCT) program



To help improve the treatment times of those with hepatitis C, the Australian government will fund a new national point-of-care testing (POCT) program that can confirm active hepatitis C infections within an hour and allow treatment to begin immediately.

The Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales (NSW) and the International Centre for Point-of-Care Testing at Flinders University will be provided with $6.5 million combined to establish the program.

Being able to provide the testing and treatment all in one visit is a real game-changer for people who would normally have to wait several weeks for a test result.

This technology can test for active hepatitis C infection by taking a small amount of blood from a fingertip. This blood is analysed on site, with a result ready for the patient within an hour. If the result comes back positive, treatment can begin during that same visit.

Under the program, testing will be available nationally at 65 sites with a high prevalence of hepatitis C infection, including drug treatment clinics, needle and syringe programs, and prisons.

The program will also include the development of standard operating procedures, logistics, deployment, operator training, and external quality assurance.