

GIVE YOUR VOICE: WRITE FOR US

HepNS is looking for writers! We know that people want more first person stories and living healthy hints. If you have a story, recipe or tip—submit it for your Community Connections newsletter.

What You Said: Survey Feedback

Here are some highlights of the member, subscriber and agency surveys that were conducted in November and December:

In the newsletter you want (in order of importance):

- Personal Stories,
- Ask an Expert
- National Hepatitis News
- HepNS News

90% of people find what they are looking for on our website, and everyone finds it easy to use.

What services are important to you (in order of importance):

- Workshops/Education
- 1.800 Provincial Support Line
- Online Resources & Information
- Online Support for people living with hepatitis

See the entire survey results under “who we are” at www.HepatitisOutreach.com

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HepNS Survey Results

HepNS Tattoo and Piercing Project.

New Tattooing Legislation in N.S.

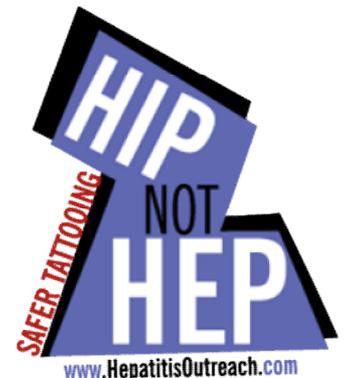
First Voice: A Youth Perspective

REACHING YOUTH: TATTOO AND PIERCING PROJECT

I was hired in September 2011, to coordinate the Youth Safer Tattooing and Piercing project, funded by Public Health Atlantic Canada (PHAC). A lengthy project title soon shortened to Hip not Hep. Hep as in hepatitis and Hip as in cool, groovy, radical... I think I'm showing my age.

Given that body art, such as tattooing and piercing, is so common among youth and that there is significant risk for infection, including bacterial and viral infections like MRSA and hepatitis C, I think this project is very necessary and very timely.

Our main goals in the Hip not Hep project are to lower the hepatitis infection rate in youth by increasing awareness about the risks of tattooing and piercing and how to choose safer practices. We give information about the how, where, when, and why to be tested for hepatitis - reduce stigma associated with living with hepatitis and let people know how to access supports for those living with and affected by hepatitis.



These goals are important but the question is how do we connect with youth and in a way that they will hear our message? One way we reached over one thousand youth in one weekend was at our Hip not Hep table at the Passport 2 Youth Success Expo hosted by the Teen Now Talk magazine in November, 2011.

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SAFER TATTOOING IN N.S. NEW LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

There are no rules in Nova Scotia about who can be a tattoo artist. At present, anyone who wants to be a tattoo artist, do piercings, or perform other body modification procedures can—they don't even need running water in the building.

New legislation — and future regulations — introduced in November aims to address this startling gap. The Body Art Act would require operators of personal service establishments who offer body art services to meet standards for infection control and the prevention of disease transmission.

"Establishments that offer these and other services require that the skin be intentionally broken, creates a risk for the transmission of infectious diseases and blood-borne pathogens," said Maureen MacDonald, Nova Scotia's Minister of Health and Wellness.

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FIRST PERSON: AMANDA

“MY LIFE IS TOO PRECIOUS”

I don't have any tattoos. My mother won't let me get one because I am too young. I have five piercings though. I have two piercings in each of my ear lobes and the cartilage in the top of one ear is pierced. It hurts less to have the cartilage pierced than my earlobes. My first piercings in my ear lobes was when I was 8 and my nanny took me. I was 10 when I got the 2nd piercings in my ear lobes. And I was 13 when I got my cartilage pierced. I got all the piercings done at the hairdressers. I want to get lots more piercings. I want my nose, belly button, and lower lip done. I'll probably wait until I'm old enough to get it done myself without needing my parents' permission.

As for getting a tattoo, I am going to wait until I am 18. I want to get a tattoo on my hip of the word faith with 3 interlocking hearts at the end of the word. You need faith to keep a family held together and there are 3 people in my family. I also want to get a tattoo of the words, “Just Dance” on my foot; because I've danced ever since I was little and that is one thing I will always do... is dance.

I found out about hepatitis C from a friend who is working on a project about it called Hip not Hep. I got to go over the presentation about the risks of getting Hep C from tattooing and piercing. I learned a lot about it from that. If not for that I never would have really known about it. I didn't hear about Hep C on the news on TV or at school. I learned about HIV in school though. I asked one of my friends about Hep C and she was like “What's Hep C?” There should be more out there about it; more awareness...maybe on the back of the milk jug... like a “Did you know?” fact. I told the school nurse that the Hip not Hep workshop is really well done. The slide show is very to the point. Short and sweet and to the point. And since no one really knows about Hep C that's what we need at our school.

If you asked me what I think about the risk of getting Hep C from things like IV drug use I would say, “Honestly, I wouldn't risk my life to do it. My life is too precious.” Some people do it because they are addicted to it and they can't find someone to help them or they don't want to admit they have an addiction. As for the risk of getting Hep C from sharing personal items; why would I want to share personal items in the first place? I'm not sharing my toothbrush with anyone. If someone asks if they can share my toothbrush, I'm like “here's the toothpaste” but I'm not sharing my toothbrush. You don't know what germs people have in their mouth.

When I got my piercings I was too young to know about the risks like getting an infection or virus. I knew about getting an ear infection; and about keeping it clean, but as far as getting a virus I had no clue. It's not up to the tattoo artist to tell you about Hep C. It's pretty much your own discretion where you go and who does the tattooing or piercing. It's up to you to understand what the dangers are before you go do it. Some of the things I learned about from the Hip not Hep project are to make sure I know who I am getting tattoos and piercings from; make sure the place is clean and sterile. It's a good idea to go first and make sure that everything is clean. And if you are getting a tat or piercing that there is plastic down or disinfection to keep things clean. And don't be scared to ask questions.



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YOUTH AND TATTOOS IN CANADA

According to a recent study about 8% of Canadian teens have a tattoo, and about 21% would like to get one. Similarly, about 23% of Canadian teens have a piercing and about 20% of teens want to get a piercing.

For more: <http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/2010/08/06/mr-10-109/>

REACHING YOUTH: TATTOO AND PIERCING PROJECT CONT'D

Another way we are reaching out to youth is with our Hip not Hep Facebook page. In the week following the TNT XPO our page had 67 followers and over 20,000 friends of followers saw posts related to our page. To check us out just search Hip not Hep from your Facebook page. It would be great if you would put a like on the page and become a follower.

In addition to these methods of getting our message of Safer Tattooing and Piercing out to youth we are delivering workshops in junior and senior high schools throughout the HRM. In the next school year we will extend our reach to northern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton with the help of our community partners such as the Northern AIDS Connection Society. We will also give workshops to youth-focused community organizations such as the Phoenix Youth Shelter.

We are working to have youth take part in developing and delivering the project; not just as participants during the workshops. This can be as simple as giving us feedback on our workshops and posting to our facebook page, or it can be more involved. Several students from Duncan MacMillan High School in Sheet Harbour are joining us as a Teen Working Group. Another school's Peer Educator group will be tailoring our workshop for their use to deliver to other students. An article in this newsletter was written by Amanda Smith, age 15, who is a member of our Hip not Hep Advisory Committee.

One of the most honest and best pieces of advice on our workshops came from a student from Highland Park Junior High in Halifax. When asked what we could do to improve the workshops he said, "More Prizes!" So we ordered a batch of black T shirts with our jazzy Hip not Hep logo on the front. Every time we deliver a workshop there is a draw and one of students wins a T shirt—and we win every time the students wear the T shirts with our Safer Tattooing message and website. We are also pleased to hand out waterless temporary tattoos of our Hip not Hep logo with the comment that these are the only tattoos that have no risk of transmitting a bacteria or virus since they don't break the skin!

In addition to handing out some great tats, pamphlets, and prizes, the Hip not Hep workshop includes an eye catching powerpoint presentation chock full of colourful graphics, and pictures of youth who have tats and piercings. During the workshop there are many opportunities for interaction, questions, and comments from participants. The level of detail and language is tailored to the situation and age of participants.

Meeting with youth of NS while developing and delivering the Hip not Hep project has been the most interesting and rewarding part of the project so far. Running a close second are the opportunities I've had to learn about other community organizations and meet with the knowledgeable and dedicated people involved.

What's coming up next for the Hip not Hep project? Our imaginations run wild with visions of videos, You Tube and flash mobs in our heads. Our ideas are only limited by the time and resources we have to work with. But we are determined to make the best use we can of this opportunity to reach Nova Scotia youth with the message of safer tattooing and piercing.

Carla

For more information about this project or to book a workshop on Youth Safer Tattooing and Piercing for your staff and/or youth please contact Carla Densmore, Program Coordinator at program@hepatitisoutreach.com or at (902) 420 1767.

"Some of us were at your Xpo booth and learned so much, thank you for helping to keep us safe."

Quote from a Facebook follower after Hip Not Hep displayed at the Halifax "Teen XPO" in November.

HIP NOT HEP BY NUMBERS:

Project Statistics from September 2011 to January 2012:

Number of Presentations: 10

Number of Participants: 141

Number of Facebook "Followers": 70

Reach through Followers: 20,000 Friends

Length of Presentation: 50 minutes

Impact on the lives of youth: **Priceless**

ABOUT US

HepNS is a charitable organization that reduces the impact of hepatitis through support, information and education.

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Community Connections is a quarterly informative publication of the Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia. We welcome your comments and contributions.

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MY LIFE IS PRECIOUS CONT'D

One of the big reasons Nova Scotia needs to know about Hep C is so that teenagers my age know not to get an at home tattoo or piercing. I know people who have had tats & piercings done at home. One of them, her friend was a tattoo artist and he came to her house and did it. For the piercing it's usually a friend doing another friend's piercing at home. One of the reasons people do them at home is because we are literally in the middle of nowhere and no one really wants to drive an hour or hour and half to get a tat or piercing if someone will do it at their house. Also people do them at home because it costs more money to go to a studio.

If I have a tat or piercing in the future I am going to save up for it. Honestly I would rather pay the money to have it done professionally instead of at home where I am at the risk of getting Hep C. If you were someone who did share your drug needles or got an at home tattoo or piercing I would get tested for Hep C just in case.

Amanda Smith is a grade 10 student at Musquodoboit Rural High School

NEW LEGISLATION CONT'D

The province will develop a regulatory process and technical guidelines for the industry which could include having non-porous surfaces so they can be cleaned properly, sanitizing equipment and separate hand-washing areas for tattoo and body piercing artists.

The Minister says the government also wants to curtail the activities of so-called "scratchers" – a term for untrained body artists who usually operate outside the industry in homes or other establishments.

It could take up to a year before the regulations are in place.

For more: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111123007>

"The Safe Body art Act, regulation and standards will establish standardized infection control procedures to reduce the possible risk of disease transmission, protecting the health of Nova Scotians who use these services. Approved facilities will receive a permit which will act as a visual clue to the public that the facility meets these minimum standards."

Carrie Fraser, Program Officer
Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness

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DONATION: \$10.00 \$25.00 \$50.00 other \$ _____

Please send me further information about HepNS

I would like to make this donation in memory/honor of _____

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