

Charles Bridges Webb Medal

Professor Nicholas Zwar

It is a great honour to be the winner of the Charles Bridges Webb Medal for 2015. I first met Charles in 1989 when I went to see him to seek his advice on a future in academic primary care. He was gracious with his time and pointed out that involvement in research was a great way of maintaining enthusiasm and intellectual interest across a whole career. How right he was as research keeps us questioning and trying to do better. Though he did not mention it Charles would be very conscious of other advantages of research involvement. Researchers are afforded a privilege that few people experience in their working lives, that is to have the freedom to develop ideas and work with colleagues to try to make them happen.

Over my career in primary health care research and teaching I have enjoyed working with a wide range of people from different professional and research backgrounds. High performing research teams are definitely more than the sum of their parts as people bring a variety of ways of thinking and a diversity of skills to difficult questions and complex projects. The creativity and shared enthusiasm that emerges from such collaborations is a process not to be missed.

I have been very fortunate to have had mentoring and support from colleagues at UNSW Australia, in particular Mark Harris and Ian Webster. I have also benefited through learning from collaborators in other Australian institutions and internationally. It has been very pleasing to see primary health care research become more multidisciplinary and also to experience closer engagement with people in policy and advocacy roles. For our research to make a difference it is essential that researchers are not just talking to each other but engaging much more broadly. Last but definitely not least has been the reward that comes from supervising and supporting students and early career researchers. These people are the future of the discipline and from what I have seen the future, while full of challenges, is bright.