

AFP GAINS IMPACT

Many AAAGP members will have heard that, after many years of trying, "Australian Family Physician" has been selected by Thomson Scientific Inc for inclusion in their Science Citation Index Expanded database.

This means that all articles published in AFP will be indexed through the Web of Science and, in due course, will generate an Impact Factor by which the journal can be judged internationally.

It's not a perfect system but it has become one of the guides by which academic authors choose in which journals to publish their research work.

For many years Australian Family Physician has been the leading publisher of Australian primary care research and we hope that this new status will further encourage AAAGP members to send us their best research manuscripts.

AFP is distributed free of charge each month to all recognised GPs, specialist physicians (FRACPs) and many other readers giving a total monthly circulation of 36,000 copies. It has been listed in PubMed for many years and is available as full-text-for-free via the Web. Plus, research authors have the option of recording a Podcast interview where they can explain the significance of their work to clinicians.

Thomson's indexing is due to begin in September so research papers submitted from now on will be included.

Prof Steve Trumble
Director, Medical Education
University of Melbourne

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President's Message

Your executive has been busy representing the interests of all who work in teaching and research in the general practice environment. Please make sure that you are both financial and promote the organisation to your colleagues.

GP&PHC Research

Conference

The General Practice and Primary Health Care Research conference was a great success. It was held at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre. Once again AAAGP was a significant presence. The AAAGP dinner was well attended and had a spectacular venue at the end of the pier looking over the harbour.

Professor Chris van Weel (Professor and Head of Department for General practice/Family medicine, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, The Netherlands) was our guest and delivered the

postprandial speech with just the right combination of humour and length.

The second AAAGP Distinguished Paper plenary was again well received. Our distinguished papers were "Getting evidence into policy: integrated governance arrangements in health care" and "Findings of the WHO ASSIST phase 3 study in an Australian primary health care setting: a 5 minute brief intervention for illicit drugs reduces substance use". These were presented by Claire Jackson and Jenny Doust (UQ) as a tag team, and Rachel Humeniuk (U of Adelaide) respectively. The response was again provided by the hard working Chris van Weel. (Con't page 2)

(Con't from page 1)

These presentations represented the strength of primary care and research conducted within and on this sector; One presentation being on evidence based health services and the other an international collaborative RCT looking at a brief intervention in general practice on a marginalised group in society.

The Association also supports a prize (a \$250 book voucher and citation) for the "Best First Time Presenter". This year's recipient was Yolanda Schweizer (ACRRM). Unfortunately she was unable to be at the final session to receive her award from Tony Abbott who closed the conference and graciously took questions from the floor. Doris Young and Jane Gunn both asked incisive questions. They were invited to submit a formal proposal for research infrastructure and practice based research networks financial support for general practice based clinical research and we have done so. This proposal has been endorsed by Professor Warrick Anderson (CEO NHMRC).

Our proposal was that the Minister endorses a practice

based payment for practices undertaking research of national significance (i.e. research that is funded by a body listed on the Australian Competitive Grants Register) in recognition of the significant infrastructure costs incurred by a practice to be involved in such research.

We argued that the Australian Government is making a substantial commitment of over \$50 million over 9 years to primary health care research via the PHCRED program. AAAGP is committed to delivering world best practice and cost-effective primary medical care delivery. To achieve this we require a sustainable, effective primary care research infrastructure and a research community that can develop and conduct research that will make a difference to the primary health care system and the health of Australians.

AAAGP strongly supports the PHCRED focus on expanding the pool of primary health care researchers. However currently the Australian primary health care research workforce is small and vulnerable and hence AAAGP supports the development of research practices to support

the expansion and consolidation of this endeavour. Such practices have existed for many years in the UK, the Netherlands and the USA where research is better established than in Australia. For example in the UK the

Letter from the Editor

This issue is unashamedly jam-packed with accounts of successful collaborations and networking between primary care researchers. Initiatives such as the Forum held by UNSW Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity help to remind key stakeholders that strong partnerships are needed if a sector which is both characterised and enriched by diversity is to continue to achieve outcomes.

The attainment of an Impact Factor by AFP is certainly encouraging to the general practice community and we congratulate all those who have worked so hard towards this end. We celebrate many of our members who have obtained Commonwealth research grants and we relive the enjoyment and collegiality of the GP & PHC Research Conference.

Our new member's contribution is particularly welcome and whilst Sarah Dennis is no newcomer to research, we hope that more who've recently managed to find time in their busy primary health care careers to embark on teaching and research will share their aspirations and tips with other members in this newsletter.

Sincerely, Dr Graeme Horton

Department of General Practice

Newcastle University

RCGP has an extensive research practice network supported by the MRC.

Practices in these countries have been supported to:

- Implement clinical data systems so that useful data (standardised, retrievable and meaningful) can be collected at the time of patient contact to enable quality improvement processes

(Con't pg3)



Enjoying our Gala Dinner from left: Deb Askew (Uni Qld), Salma Fahridin, Julie O'Halloran, and Clare Bayram (BEACH Program)

(Con't from page 2)

(monitoring, planning, reflection) and research;

- Gather data which are useful at the practitioner, practice, locality and national level;
- Implement evidence based practice and facilitate the translation of clinical research findings into routine clinical practice;
- Address research questions of priority to the primary care sector and policy makers.

From this the development of a funded and supported research practice network can be seen to be long overdue in Australia.

International and local experience have found that the success of such networks is highly dependent upon:

- The ability of practices and practitioners to work together towards a common coding framework for data collection (i.e. all network members coding a presenting problem or disease consistently);
- The level of remuneration (i.e. enabling practice staff to meet together to agree upon coding, refine coding, define questions for evaluation)
- The level of IT support available to the practices.

A suggested payment model of delivery would be on the lines of the Practice Incentive Program

(PIP) support for in-practice teaching of undergraduates. The costs of such a program could be modelled by people within DOHA with input from AAAGP.

GP Education summit

The initiative of AAAGP to address the 'tsunami' of medical students reached fruition with the GP Education summit held at the Melbourne Airport Hilton on July 24th. Twenty seven different stakeholder groups were represented. The work and initiative of Jon Emery, Dimity Pond and Steve Trumble representing your organisation) needs to be acknowledged but especially Jon who initially raised this at our Heads of Department meeting in Perth.

Mark Nelson

President AAAGP



Above: Prof Chris Van Weel presenting Clare Jackson & Jenny Doust with their "Most Distinguished Paper"



Primary Health Care Research & Information Service

www.phcris.org.au

2007 GP & PHC Research Conference: Working Together

Together

Sheri Millar & Ellen McIntyre

PHCRIS

For those interested in research, evaluation and development in primary health care the General Practice & Primary Health Care Research conference was, for the thirteenth consecutive year, "brilliant".

The conference was a collaborative venture, and PHC RIS would like to thank our partners the Australian Association

for Academic General Practice (AAAGP), the Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing, and the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI).

With the theme for 2007 *working together* the focus of the conference was on building partnerships and promoting collaborative endeavours between research, policy and practice elements of the primary health care sector.

This conference provided ample opportunities for PHC researchers, decision makers, practitioners and consumers,

to meet each other to network, form collaborations, share ideas, and debate the many issues raised by speakers and delegates.

Although the program for this full three day conference was jam packed with paper presentations, poster displays, four plenary sessions, one of which included an interactive "on the couch" discussion session, there was still time for many formal and impromptu meetings and social engagements.

One highlight was the well attended lunchtime session where one of the new

(Con't pg 5)

Members in Action— Grants Awarded

Congratulations to the following members who will be sharing in the \$6.5 million in grants awarded by the Commonwealth Government announced in May this year.

Prof Mark Harris - Uni NSW

“The prevention & management of chronic disease”.

Prof Nigel Stocks - Uni Adelaide

“A collaborative research program in cardiovascular and respiratory disease”.

A/Prof Geoff Mitchell - Uni Qld

“Developing an evidence base for clinical palliative care & general practice on chronic & complex disease management”.

Dr Grant Blashki - Uni Melbourne

“Psychological treatments delivered in primary care - specifically improvements in clinical care, integration & use of evidence in policy”.

Dr John Furler - Uni Melbourne

“Chronic disease in general practice, focusing on diabetes & depression, & the role of general practice in addressing health inequalities”.

Dr Lynn Kemp - Uni NSW

“The integrated provision of comprehensive primary health care services in early childhood”.

Dr Marie Pirotta - Uni Melbourne “Primary care women’s sexual health”.

Dr Emily Hansen - Uni Tasmania

“Prevention through behaviour change & effective management of chronic disease in primary health care settings”.

Introducing a new member.... Sarah Dennis

What Do I Do?

I am a senior research fellow at the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity at University of New South Wales. My research interests are in the management of chronic disease, particularly respiratory disease. Recently I have been developing skills in systematic reviews and linkage and exchange between researchers and policy makers. My other role is capacity building, which involves teaching and mentoring novice primary care researchers through the PHCRED program.

What attracted me to research?

Like many primary care researchers I fell into it! I was a physio but was really interested in “receptors” so decided to

return to university to study pharmacology and neurophysiology. However, during my master’s, whilst frantically isolating modified strychnine receptors I realised that I preferred studying whole creatures to bits of them in test tubes! I



landed a job with the Medical Research Council’s Epidemiol-

ogy and Medical Care Unit in London to undertake a large asthma clinical trial in primary care. They sent me off to train in epidemiology and encouraged me to do a PhD. I was really lucky, working at the MRC meant that I was exposed to a variety of UK and international experts and this fuelled my interest and enthusiasm for population health and health services research which has continued here at UNSW.

Have I any tips for others?

Finishing your PhD is worth it although don’t expect to feel a tremendous sense of elation when you finally hand it in. Keep your research question simple!

The AAAGP newsletter is published in Mar, July & Nov each year and welcomes letters to the editor and also articles of interest from our membership.

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If you would like to know more about AAAGP or to become a member visit our website and download an application form: www.aaagp.org

The UNSW Research Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity held its “Annual Forum” on 31st May 2007. The event was well-attended with representatives from government (state and commonwealth), the Divisions network, community health, non-government organisations and academia.

The morning session of the Forum included a keynote presentation from Prof Bonnie Sibbald of the National Primary Care Research and Development Centre, University of Manchester in the UK. Prof Sibbald presented the results of recent research on nurse led chronic disease management in primary health care, concluding that the involvement of nurses in CDM can provide equal or higher care, but it is not necessarily a cheaper alternative.

There then followed an overview’s of the centre’s work and comments from collaborators from the National Heart Foundation, NSW and South East Sydney Division of General Practice.

The afternoon session was a more ‘hands on’ opportunity for collaborators and stake-holders to discuss the future direction of the Centre’s work as well as broader issues relating to research and policy.

There were a number of interesting and encouraging messages arising from discussion at the forum, including:

- Research into policy and practice needs long term partnerships between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.
- Local commentary is essential for interpreting lessons from

different health systems and seeing how overseas research applies to Australian conditions

- Primary Health Care Research should lead the way by doing ‘whole of system’ research rather than focussing on specific health sectors

Although researchers may feel they are being demanding, services and service providers feel they get significant benefits from being part of research.

It was particularly encouraging to note the broad agreement amongst stakeholders about what is needed in primary health care research and the belief that we are on the way to achieving it.

Rachel Tomlins
Centre for Primary Health Care & Equity UNSW

(Con’t from pg 3)

PHCRED Senior Research Fellows Dr Grant Blashki spoke on climate change in his role as one of Al Gore’s climate change ambassadors.

Delegates were inspired, challenged, motivated and provoked by our guest speakers.

Professor Chris van Weel of The Netherlands urged Australian researchers to collaborate with each other by citing general practice research, and use international collaborations more. He believes it is crucial that general practice research remains focused on the overriding aspects of patient care, beyond the single disease or intervention, and remains based in the paradigms of general practice of (i) personal, patient-centred, care; (ii) continuity of care; and (iii) care in the context of the family and social environment.

Professor Nicky Britten of the Peninsula Postgraduate Health Institute, UK led a highly successful workshop on qualitative analysis, and explored aspects of the ways patient participation in the consultation has been defined. Many were interested in

her discussion of the practitioner’s role in setting the agenda, by asking questions such as

What can I do for you today? (for a new problem) or How are you? (for an ongoing problem).

(Con’t pg 6)



From left: Nick Glasgow, Libby Kalucy, Hon Tony Abbott MP, Ellen McIntyre and Mark Nelson .

(Con't from pg 5)

Professor David Currow of Cancer Australia emphasised that care could be improved by broader and more effective engagement of primary care at all points of the cancer trajectory. Potentially there would be 10-15% improvement in outcomes if everyone received current best evidence care. Primary care

leadership is vital in both service delivery and research to reduce the impact of cancer across the community, and to lessen the divide in outcomes across Australia.

Many AAAGP members took advantage of the opportunity to raise pressing issues about research training and other matters with Minister Tony Abbott when he closed the con-

ference. He announced \$6.5 million in research funding, and in his press release announced the names of the twelve researchers who have been awarded four-year PHCRED research fellowships.

If you would like to view the conference abstracts and presentations please visit our website, www.phcris.org.au/conference

Other Events

RACGP Annual Scientific Convention
4-7 October 2007
Sydney Convention Centre

AAAGP will be having our AGM at this convention incorporating a breakfast. We will also be hosting a research session on the highlights of the last 50yrs of research in general practice.

4th Biennial NSW Primary

Health Care Research & Evaluation Conference
29-30 November 2007
Swiss Grand Resort & Spa, Bondi Beach

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

This is an opportunity for GPs, divisional staff, community, Indigenous and allied health professionals and academics to present their work, network and

learn. Early career researchers are encouraged to submit abstracts.

Closing date for abstracts:

10 Aug 2007

For a full list of relevant events visit:

www.phcris.org.au/eventsdiary/index.php

Travelling Fellowship

Applications are now open for our Travelling Fellowship.

Travelling Fellowships are offered at a maximum of \$5000 for a study trip of not less than 2 weeks duration. The funds are available to cover costs of travel to and from the host institution and to contribute towards accommodation costs. Airfares will be reimbursed for the cost of an advance purchase economy airfare. Applicants should book the cheapest available online fare wherever possible.

Closing date 31 August 2007.

Aims of the AAAGP Travelling Fellowship Program

- To enhance Australian academic general practice
- To foster collaboration between Australian general practice researchers
- To foster collaboration between academic departments of general practice
- To provide assistance to members of AAAGP to undertake study leave within Australia

More details visit our website: www.aaagp.org.

Mission & Goals

Formed in 1983, AAAGP aims to promote & develop the discipline of general practice through:
Encouraging originality, questioning & exploration of ideas within teaching & research environment.

Providing a forum for exchange of information & ideas.

Encouraging shared academic activities.

Fostering & supporting career development in academic general practice.

Supporting the continuing development of academic general practice