

AAAPC

Australasian Association for
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The Hon Mark Butler MP
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing

18 October 2021

Dear Minister Butler,

Medical Research Future Fund Primary Health Care Research 2021

We write to draw your attention the recently announced MRFF Primary Health Care Research Initiative. The two specific streams of this call – one relating to testing existing wearables in primary health care, and the second on new point-of-care testing in rural practice or through mobile delivery – represent only a tiny fraction of primary care and primary health care research. We can only assume that this very narrow call will not be the only use of the \$10m allocated to support primary care research within the MRFF budget.

The Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020-2022, developed by the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board, highlighted Primary Care Research as a Priority Area for funding and called for a 'more concerted effort in primary care research' in recognition of 'the growth in chronic and complex diseases' which are managed increasingly in primary care. We note in this report a separate priority area of Digital Health Intelligence which includes research into wearables. There is therefore no need for the limited resources available within the MRFF budget for primary health care research to be allocated to fund research that could be accommodated within a different MRFF funding stream.

The majority of health care is delivered in the primary health care sector, and this is a major factor in the overall cost-effectiveness of the Australian healthcare system. Despite this, primary health care continues to be the poor relation in terms of its share of Australian research funding. The need for targeted investment in applied and translational research in primary health care, and to build primary health care research capacity is clearly recognised in several recent reports including the current draft recommendations from the Primary Health Reform Steering Group.

In the 2019 Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' priority setting process, many research priorities were identified. The research streams funded in the current round of the MRFF Primary Health Care Research Initiative do not represent priority areas for this sector.



We would welcome advice and discussion on how your office could assist in ascertaining the way Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020-2022 are used to determine specific areas of focus for MRFF Primary Health Care Research. Primary care researchers with specific expertise in this area, represented by the signatories to this letter, would be happy to engage in conversation to prevent such narrow calls in future MRFF funding rounds.

Yours sincerely,



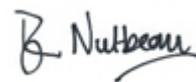
Phyllis Lau
President of
Australasian
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