

PCRU Grant Successes!

Congratulations to the PCRU team for their outstanding effort in securing funding for research across a wide range of primary care topics.

Departmental staff have been successful in obtaining in excess of \$2,714,119 in grants for the period January – October 2008. Funding bodies include the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute. In the next edition we will provide further details about these. ☘

A new role for Professor Doris Young

Congratulations to Professor Young who has been appointed as Associate Dean (Academic) and Director of the Graduate Programs Unit in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.



In her new role Doris will be responsible for the governance of the Faculty's postgraduate coursework programs and will provide leadership in the upcoming graduate professional courses under the Melbourne Model. The appointment is 0.5 EFT for a minimum of 2 years so she will remain in the Department as Professor and Chair of General Practice half time. She will be easing into the new role over the next few months. We wish her all the best in this new and exciting chapter in her career! ☘

Two Day Short Course – “An Introduction to Primary Care Research”

12th-13th March 2009

Most healthcare in Australia is delivered in the general practice setting. Yet how much of this healthcare is underpinned by good research evidence? PCRU is offering a 2-day intensive course which aims to introduce participants to various aspects of primary healthcare research. Topics include:

- Why do we need research in primary care?
- What drives primary care research in Australia?
- Conducting research in primary care
- Exploring primary care research

On completion of the course participants will be able to:

- Describe the key functions of research in primary care
- Explain the main factors that drive and influence research and its use in everyday practice
- Identify strategies which support effective collaboration in research among primary care stakeholders
- Be familiar with a variety of methods for accessing primary care research results. ☘

For further information about course content and cost please contact Dr Meredith Temple-Smith by email at m.temple-smith@unimelb.edu.au



Dr. Meredith Temple-Smith

Patients Give GPs the Tick

Maria Potiriadis is a Senior Research Assistant who has undertaken a Master of Primary Health Care. She investigated the factors among young people which influence their rating of GP / family doctors and their practice. Here, she reports on the results of her recently published paper on patient ratings of general practice care in Australia.

Not everybody sings their general practitioners' praises. Ask anyone about a local doctor and you are likely to hear a story about a long wait, a rushed consultation or even a missed diagnosis. Even so, GPs are the most accessed health care provider when Australians are faced with a health concern.

Being a GP is not an easy job. As one of the few remaining medical generalists, GPs are expected to cover physical and mental health problems in addition to a wide range of social responsibilities such as medical and social security certificates. Not to mention preventive care which is becoming ever more complex with immunisation schedules, screening protocols and a variety of structured health plans.

GPs are also the gatekeepers of the health system assessing millions of patients per year. GPs take an undifferentiated problem, a worry or concern and together with the patient determine the most appropriate treatment pathway. Sometimes this means deciding which medical or non medical specialist might best assist. Some would say they are the common sense in an often frightening health system.

So it's good news for GPs that our study recently published in the Medical Journal of Australia reports that most patients think GPs are doing a good job. We surveyed over 7000 patients aged 18 to 75 years from city, regional and rural Victoria about their satisfaction with GP care using the widely validated General Practice Assessment Questionnaire (GPAQ). The GPAQ assesses six (6) scales of general practice care including access, treatment by receptionists, continuity of care, communication, nursing care and overall satisfaction.

Patients rated their satisfaction with their GP with an average score of 80/100 overall and their satisfaction with GPs' communication skills very highly with a mean score of 86/100. Those patients who were most satisfied tended to be older, had visited the GP more often and had been a regular patient of the GP for more than a year.



Maria Potiriadis

Of course finding a good, regular GP is not always simple with the medical workforce shortage and many part-time doctors, which is especially a problem in rural and regional areas. In our study, patients rated GPs accessibility at only a mean score of 60 which still leaves much room for improvement.

In recent decades there has been increasing scrutiny of GPs and increasing demands placed upon them. Our study shows that although GPs are stretched for time, overall most patients are satisfied with the service that GPs provide." ❧

Ref. Potiriadis M, Chondros P, Gilchrist G, Hegarty K, Blashki G, Gunn J. How do Australian patients rate their general practitioner? A descriptive study using the General Practice Assessment Questionnaire. MJA 2008; 189: 215-219.; 189: 215-219. - Maria Potiriadis

Refurbishment

The Department of General Practice, home of PCRU, is currently undergoing a major transformation. Between December 2008 and February 2009, the ground floor of 200 Berkeley Street will be completely refurbished. Most work will be done on re-modelling the open plan workstations to allow better lighting and circulation of air. During the renovation period staff are working from a variety of locations but core administrative staff are temporarily housed in the seminar room adjacent to the Departmental entrance. ❧

The 2009 RACGP Research Foundation Grants Round is opening soon! Start developing your research proposal!

"Developing a strong research culture in general practice"

Applications for the 2009 RACGP Research Foundation Grant round **open on Tuesday 9 February and close on Wednesday 15 April 2009 (5pm EST)**.

Application forms and detailed information on each award will be available soon at the Research Foundation: www.racgp.org.au/researchfoundation

Up to \$120,000 in scholarships, grants and awards will be offered in 2009 by the Research Foundation to encourage more general practitioners to conduct research. New and emerging researchers are encouraged to apply. The Research Foundation aims to promote research capacity within general practice by offering grants, scholarships and awards for researchers into family medical care, indigenous health, motor vehicle trauma, integrative medicine and more.

GPs interested in applying for one of these grants are advised to begin developing their research ideas, reviewing literature and contacting experienced GP researchers who are willing to provide mentoring or supervision either through the RACGP at www.racgp.org.au or the Primary Health Care Research & Information Service on www.phcris.org.au/phcred.

For more information please visit www.racgp.org.au/researchfoundation or contact Ana Lucia da Cruz, RACGP Research and Grants Program Administrator by email on research@racgp.org.au or telephone 03 8699 0481. ☘

Public Lecture

Embodied Suffering: enhancing GPs' response to patients from hard-to-reach groups

MONDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2009 @ 5PM

VENUE: Lecture Theatre 2, Level 1 Alan Gilbert Building, The University of Melbourne, Grattan Street, Carlton.



Professor of Primary Medical Care in the School of Population, Community and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Liverpool, Prof Christopher Dowrick is also a Senior Investigator with the National Institute of Research in England, and a Professorial Fellow at The University of Melbourne, Australia.

Prof. Christopher Dowrick

Primary care can now offer effective interventions for people with common mental health problems. However many groups do not receive the help they deserve, either because they do not access primary care, or because they receive inadequate care when they do. Professor Dowrick is leading a R&D programme to increase equity of access to high quality mental health services in primary care in the north-west of England.

His team is designing a new multi-faceted model of care with three components: increased community awareness; enhanced cultural competence within primary care; and expanded, tailored psychosocial interventions. In this lecture he will explain and discuss this new model of care, with emphasis on GPs' response to diverse presentations of suffering. ☘

SPEAKER: Prof. Christopher Dowrick

Professor of Primary Medical Care in the School of Population, Community and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Liverpool

RSVP by Monday 9th February, 2009

PCRU Mental Health Program Coordinator, Maria Potiriadis: m.potiriadis@unimelb.edu.au