

## THE ROLE OF PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH NETWORKS IN SOLVING REAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



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### Introduction

Selected VicReN members are currently participating in two research projects that contribute to the improved understanding and management of mental health, whilst also building the capacity of practice nurses. VicReN supports general practitioner (GP) and practice nurse (PN) advisers to these projects to ensure the interventions are sustainable and successful in primary care.

VicReN, the Victorian Primary Care Practice-Based Research Network, was established in 2007 to build members' research capacity and to promote a research culture in primary health care.

### Research

#### Ageing Care in General Practice Study

This national cluster randomised controlled trial aims to determine how general practitioners can best diagnose and manage early dementia.

It examines whether a new dementia screening tool and training in the RACGP Dementia Guidelines will improve the diagnosis and management of both patients with dementia and their carers. Its sub-study aims to explore the mental health and wellbeing of those who care for people with dementia.

Dementia prevalence doubles approximately every 5 years from the age of 60 and carers of those with cognitive decline are known to suffer low mood. Researchers including practice nurses visit participants to undertake cognitive function and depression screening instruments as well as quality of life questionnaires.

#### Women's Evaluation of Abuse and Violence Care in General Practice (weave)

This randomised controlled trial aims to evaluate whether the education of GPs and PNs to counsel female patients experiencing intimate partner violence improves aspects of their safety, wellbeing and quality of life. Intimate partner violence is the major health problem for Australian women under 50.

#### Benefits to the Community

The interventions in each project were developed with the contributions of practicing GPs and PNs. Results include feedback on the interventions from participating practices are communicated to research staff and participant's clinicians to further refine research methodology and improve clinical care.

Through these studies, VicReN-associated research contributes to the evidence-base of mental illness management as well as the knowledge and skills of clinicians. This will improve community health outcomes through informing both practice and policy.



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