

Welcome to the January edition of the VicReN e-bulletin in which we invite members to participate in a wide variety of important research projects, consider applying to undertake your own research project through RACGP, provide information about the essential considerations for undertaking a research project and introduce VicReN Committee Member Judy Evans.

## Welcome all VicReN members to 2009!

2008 proved an exciting year for VicReN—not only did its membership grow but members also contributed to undertaking research and provided valuable contributions to research projects. The first breakfast meeting was successful, prompting members to consider the possibility of sharing data between practices. Here's an overview of events and what's in store for 2009.

Congratulations on being a VicReN member. It means that you are interested in promoting research in primary care and understand, or are learning about, the importance of research to fill the gaps in the evidence base of primary care. Without relevant research, the way we practice would not have a credible basis. Traditionally, for a number of reasons, primary care research has been overlooked and only recently has it been put on the Federal Government's agenda and supported. VicReN aims to spur and support research projects important to primary care and to ensure that developing research projects are grounded in daily practice. VicReN aims also to build its members research knowledge through a variety of methods: participation in research projects, contribution to research forums, information in e-bulletins, and invitations to research-related events.

What does the VicReN membership look like?

**General Practitioners: 77 and Practice Nurses: 11**

**Primary Care stakeholders: 7 and Academic members: 4**

Of our membership, 47 members are located in an urban setting and 30 are located rurally. Additionally, the VicReN e-bulletin is sent to over 100 clinical, academic and administrative members of the Department of General Practice.

In 2008:

- VicReN was presented at 4 conferences and meetings
- 7 e-bulletins were published
- 3 VicReN Committee GPs hold posts on randomised controlled trials as GP Advisers
- 2 VicReN forums were held between VicReN GPs and the research team of the randomized controlled trial HopSCOTCH to facilitate knowledge exchange and build a trial that acknowledges the way general practice operates
- 4 research projects were supported administratively by VicReN
- 1 breakfast meeting chaired by academic GP Dr Marie Pirota was held, open to all members.
- 4 VicReN Committee meetings were held around the development and scope of VicReN.

VicReN will continue to engage its members in 2009 through continuing the series of breakfast meetings, invitations to research related activities and by asking for your thoughts and opinions on research projects VicReN wishes to support. Through these methods, VicReN can help build not only your research knowledge but a research culture in primary care—to change the face and practice of primary care.

## Final Opportunity for GPs to Join weave

Over ten thousand Victorian community-based women have been screened for partner abuse across 24 practices as part of the **weave** project. Partner abuse is a common, hidden problem in general practice, with up to five affected women attending unsuspecting GPs each week. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to the **weave** project, a world-first randomised controlled trial based at the Department of General Practice, The University of Melbourne. The project is aiming to address the problem of domestic violence through evaluating the impact of screening and interventions.

We are recruiting now for the final group of GPs. Please contact the **weave** coordinator **Lorna O'Doherty** on **8344 3369** or email **[l.odoherty@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:l.odoherty@unimelb.edu.au)** if you wish to know more.



# Childhood Obesity—want to help us tackle this weighty issue?

Around 200,000 Australian children are obese. Most of them are in contact with a GP.

With effective interventions, GPs could help many families tackle this problem.



HopSCOTCH—the Shared Care Overweight Trial in Children—is trialling a new shared-care model between GPs and Royal Children’s Hospital obesity specialists. Its approach is **designed by GPs** and childhood obesity experts **for GPs**.

Royal Children’s Hospital is working with VicReN and the Department of General Practice to undertake this world-first trial.

**Within the next 2 weeks you will receive an invitation** to become one of 45 Victorian GPs to take part.

### Why be involved?

- Learn the latest about managing childhood obesity
- Help build the evidence base for childhood obesity
- Use RCH resources for some of your own patients
- Earn QA&CPD points
- Some remuneration is available

### How do you take part?

- We will send you an invitation OR
- You can contact us now (we aim to recruit GPs located within a 15km radius of RCH)

### Any questions, or if you’d like to join now:

- Call HopSCOTCH on (03) 8341 6485
- Email [hop.scotch@mcri.edu.au](mailto:hop.scotch@mcri.edu.au)
- Check out [rch.org.au/ccch/hopscotch](http://rch.org.au/ccch/hopscotch)



## VicReN Research Update

### PTSD Clinical Treatment Algorithm

At any one time, 250,000 Australians have Post traumatic Stress Disorder. The Australian Centre for Post-traumatic Mental Health has produced an easy-to-use algorithm outlining the treatment of adults with Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Based on the recently National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)-approved clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of adults with ASD and PTSD, the algorithm has been produced in collaboration with the RACGP and the RANZCP, and has been approved by NHMRC and endorsed by the RANZCP, RACGP, and APS.

You can download a PDF version of the PTSD Clinical Treatment Algorithm directly from:

<http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/resources/resources-guidelines.html#1>

# The 10 Steps of the Research Process

## 3. Design the study and consider the methodology

In this third part of the 10-part series, we begin our consideration of the essential components of a research project. In forthcoming e-bulletins, we will outline more specific information including survey design, sample size and statistics, in addition to selecting the appropriate methodology for a research project.

In previous editions, we have addressed where research ideas and questions come from, and how to undertake a literature review of the area of interest. Once a literature review has been performed and the researcher knows who and what is going to be researched, it's time to consider how the research will be undertaken.

Novice researchers will work under the guidance of a research expert who may be an academic or belong to an organization that has a research unit, such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, or a hospital unit. They provide useful information and specific guidance about how to go about the research and provide essential contacts including a statistician, assistance with ethics and other leaders in the field of interest. It is assumed that by this stage, the novice researcher would have successfully applied for a grant to support the research. An excellent program to encourage novice researchers has been established by the Federal Government's program to support primary care research, known as Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development Fellowships. They support those working in primary health care for 9-12 months to undertake research for a day a week who are supervised through the Department of General Practices located at both the University of Melbourne and Monash University. Both rural and urban locations are possible. For more information, contact **m.temple-smith@unimelb.edu.au**

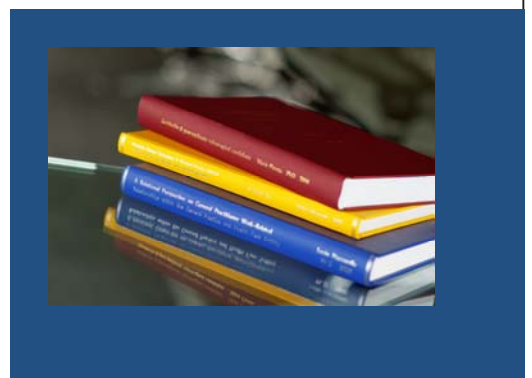
The funding application will prompt a researcher to consider how the project will be undertaken in real terms. These questions include:

- What tests or instruments will you need to use to measure an aspect of or to explore your population?
- Where would the tests or instruments be conducted and by whom?
- Who will assist with undertaking the ethics application, if necessary?
- Who will assist with costing the research?
- How large would the sample size need to be to determine a statistically meaningful result?
- What research method is appropriate for the research project?
- Are qualitative and/or quantitative research methods appropriate?
- Is a control group necessary?
- How will the samples be recruited?
- If the samples are to be randomized, how will this be achieved?
- Will there be any payment for the subjects recruited?
- Will there be any collaborators on the research project?
- Will any other staff need to be recruited to undertake administrative/clinical or other functions?
- Who will input the data and validate its integrity?
- Who will analyse the data, how, and where?
- Who will write the final reports and prepare any publications for dissemination?
- Are there any intellectual property issues to consider?

Don't be put off—like any job, research requires essential processes to be put in place to ensure its integrity. All of the above issues will be discussed with a supervisor in a logical sequence that will make the project approachable and easy to manage. Not all of the questions above will be applicable to a research project. They are listed here to provide examples of what researchers need to think about when a research question is selected for investigation.

### Resources:

- Hek G, Langton H, Blunden G (2000) *Systematically searching and reviewing literature*. Nurse Researcher 7(3) Spring.
- Hek G, Judd M and Moule P (2004) *Making Sense of Research: An Introduction for Health and Social Care Practitioners*. SAGE Publications Ltd, Great Britain.
- Sim, J and Wright C (2000) *Research in Health Care: Concepts, Designs and Methods*. Stanley Thornes Ltd, Great Britain.





THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN  
COLLEGE OF  
GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

The 2009 RACGP Research Foundation Grants Round  
is opening soon! Starting 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 website [www.racgp.org.au/researchfoundation](http://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](http://www.racgp.org.au) or the Primary Health Care Research & Information Service on [www.phcris.org.au/phcred/](http://www.phcris.org.au/phcred/). For more information please visit [www.racgp.org.au/researchfoundation](http://www.racgp.org.au/researchfoundation) or contact Ana Lucia da Cruz, RACGP Research and Grants Program Administrator by email on [research@racgp.org.au](mailto:research@racgp.org.au) or telephone (03) 8699 0481.

## Do you have patients with Klinefelter Syndrome?

Klinefelter Syndrome (KS) is the most common chromosome disorder in males (47XXY), affecting approximately 1 in 650 males. **That represents almost 15,000 males in Australia - yet up to 70% of cases remain undiagnosed, even though they may benefit from treatment.** Despite decades of work on the medical aspects of KS, little is known about how diagnosis with KS impacts psychosocially on an individual, and how this is influenced by age at diagnosis.

Andrology Australia, the national men's health organisation, together with the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Prince Henrys Institute and Monash University, is undertaking a questionnaire study to determine how treatments and interventions accessed at different ages affect adult biomedical and quality of life outcomes.

Men with KS aged 18 years and older, but diagnosed at all different ages (including prenatally), are invited to take part in the study.

**Doctors with KS patients are asked to forward study information to their patients** by mail or at a consultation. Study posters are also available for clinic waiting rooms. For colour copies of these materials or further information, please contact the project coordinator:

Amy Herlihy  
Public Health Genetics, MCRI  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Royal Childrens Hospital  
Flemington Road, Parkville  
VIC 3052  
Phone: (03) 8341 6370  
Fax: (03) 8341 6212

[klinefeltersyndrome@gmail.com](mailto:klinefeltersyndrome@gmail.com)



Ms Amy Herlihy

# 7 Questions for Practice Nurse Judy Evans

Judy Evans, VicReN Committee Member, is committed to developing the role of practice nurses and is currently undertaking a Masters in Nursing Leadership. She is a principal partner in *walkerevans consulting*, and also works for the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. She brings a wealth of knowledge and ideas to VicReN.

Judy Evans is a recent addition to the VicReN Committee and we are delighted to receive her valuable contributions. Judy has worked as a practice nurse for over a decade and formerly was President of the Australian Practice Nurses Association. With fellow practice nurse Lynne Walker, she has established the consulting company *walkerevans consulting*, which is designed to provide advice to general practices to maximise their nursing services. Judy works tirelessly to promote and build the role of practice nurses.

*“VicReN gives me the opportunity to engage with GPs and PNs who value research and want to see research as a part of the mind set of general practice. It also offers an opportunity to promote nursing and the nurses role in primary health care.”*

## 1) How long have you been a practice nurse for?

14 years.

## 2) What are the highlights of your job?

I wear three hats that cover clinical practice, policy development/projects and practice staff education. Working as a practice nurse I utilise my clinical skills including immunisation as an accredited nurse immuniser. I work at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in the policy and project area supports the provision of recourses and education for general practitioners (GPs) and practice nurses (PNs). As principal partner in *walkerevans consulting* I get to go out to practices and talk with practice staff and workshop some of the system and knowledge barriers that impact on the practice team achieving efficiency and effective risk management. This makes each day interesting.

## 3) What are you currently studying and how is it important to primary health care?

I am studying the Masters of Nursing: Leadership.

The primary health care sector requires change to respond to the high demand for patient care amidst an environment of workforce shortages. For the role of the practice nurse to engage in this change, the profession must meet the challenge by clearly identifying and articulating to ourselves and our colleagues our nursing vision for the future, so we too need the voice of leadership. If nursing does not identify and support nurses to develop as leaders we will fall prey to others who are keen to manipulate our practice. The professional development of the nurse will fail if it is based only on the business model of employing a nurse within a practice. It is vital to engage leadership preparation programs with wider organizational development strategies, not just development of clinical leadership.

## 4) and 5) What role do you see for a PBRN such as VicReN in general practice?

Nurses often find it difficult to access peer reviewed journals and academic papers so as to critically develop an evidence based approach to their work. By promoting research at a practice level not only affirms the ongoing need for relevant research into primary care but also builds team work and a research-based approach to the delivery of care to our patients.



Ms Judy Evans

## 6) Why are you interested in participating in VicReN?

VicReN gives me the opportunity to engage with GPs and PNs who value research and want to see research as a part of the mind set of general practice. It also offers an opportunity to promote nursing and the nurses role in primary health care.

## 7) What would you like VicReN to offer you?

Access to research; a space to learn; a space to share my experience and my interests.

## General practitioners, practice nurses and practice managers: are you interested in joining VicReN?

If you would like to learn more about how VicReN can build your research skills capacity, add a new dimension to your day-to-day routine, or link you with other primary care practitioners with a genuine research interest, don't hesitate to contact the VicReN Coordinator Melinda Soós for more information on (03) 8344 3392 or via [msoos@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:msoos@unimelb.edu.au)