

APHCRI@work

HUB ISSUE

GP&PHC RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Professor Larry Green –

General Practitioners in America have faced extinction and changed their model of practicing to avoid it, and Australia could be facing a similar challenge if doctors fail to learn the lessons of their counterparts, says Professor Larry Green.

Professor Green warned that Australian GPs needed to work more closely with evolving health workers – like independent nurse practitioners – to survive.

A Senior Scholar in Residence at the Robert Graham Center in Washington, Professor Green has spent much of his career as a general practitioner and studying the profession.

In the United States GPs have shifted to a 'New Model' of care based on patient-centred care, access and quality care, in response to the perception that specialist care equals best care.

Professor Larry Green was the APHCRI-sponsored keynote speaker at this year's General Practice and Primary Health Care Research Conference.

Commenting on workforce issues, Professor Green said the solution to the doctor shortages in Australia was 'probably' a mild increase in the number of doctors, a better working relationship with evolving medical care workers and more multidisciplinary teams.



Professors Larry Green and Nicholas Glasgow during Professor Green's visit to Australia

Earlier in the conference Professor Green joined a panel that discussed comments from Professor Martin Roland about incentives used in the UK's National Health Service (NHS) to improve quality. While Professor Roland argued that bonus payments for GPs had increased quality to an extent, Professor Green argued the American experience was that throwing money into a health system was not the best way to see services improve.

Professor Green made a valuable contribution to the conference and provided considerable insight and commentary on the changes in US general practice.

PANDEMIC FLU FORUM

APHCRI is part of a College of Medicine and Health Sciences research team investigating the best General Practice response in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

The work, led by Dr Christine Phillips, is in response to a call for urgent research by the NHMRC at the end of 2005.

Last month the group held a consultation forum with representatives from ADGP, State Health departments, the Department of Health and Ageing, indigenous groups and other stakeholders.

The forum provided feedback on the research to date, offered insights from a variety of viewpoints and put forward a number of issues arising from the research.

Some of those issues include: general practices ability to treat non-pandemic flu patients, different approaches to care for pandemic flu patients – internet and telephone consultations and the repercussions for GPs own health and that of their families.

A paper based on the outcomes of this meeting will be published as part of the research, which is due to be completed in mid-August.

STREAM SIX

APHCRI calls for participation in Stream Six of its Research Program. Stream Six will systematically identify, review and synthesise knowledge about the primary health care workforce and develop practical policy options fit for use in the Australian context.

APHCRI has set specific workforce research questions in three topic areas, and is now seeking to commission groups to form spokes to address these questions. Stream Six will encourage interactions between researchers and policy advisors with the goal of increasing the capacity of researchers to respond to policy priorities on the one hand, and increase the capacity of policy advisors to use research evidence on the other. The closing date for Stream Six applications is 30 August 2006.

For more information about Stream Six visit: http://www.anu.edu.au/aphcri/Spokes_Research_Program/Stream_Six.php

STREAM FIVE

Seven projects will be funded under APHCRI's Stream Five program of commissioned research.

Funding for this round was offered to researchers who had already participated or were actively participating in Streams One through Four, for the purposes of developing their work further.

APHCRI's Director, Professor Nicholas Glasgow, announced the \$1.5 million worth of funding at the General Practice and Primary Health Care Research Conference in July.

"Many of our research teams have begun some fascinating work that will result in answers to important policy questions plaguing governments. We decided it was important to extend some of the work that was already being done and take it to the next level," he said. "We congratulate this contingent of successful teams and look forward to seeing the results of their endeavours late next year," he added.

Research funded in this round includes:

- A project to help GPs recognise and treat mental illness that arises from drug and alcohol disorders (Professor Helen Christensen, The Australian National University)
- The creation of a portfolio of interventions for primary care providers aimed at children aged 2-5 to prevent obesity developing in childhood (Professor Donna Cross, Edith Cowan University)
- An evaluation of the impact of practice nurse-led adolescent health clinics in general practice (Associate Professor Kelsey Hegarty, University of Melbourne)
- An investigation of rural and remote health successes and how to sustain them (Associate Professor John Wakerman, Flinders University)
- Developing smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical exercise (SNAP) management programs as part of the new over-45 health check (Professor Mark Harris, University of New South Wales)
- Process tools for evidence-policy transfer in Indigenous-mainstream primary health care partnerships (Dr Jeffrey Fuller, University of Sydney)
- Organising care for depression and related disorders in the Australian primary health care setting – Tasmanian and cross-cultural component (Professor Jane Gunn, University of Melbourne)

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Some of you may be aware of changes in the Australian National University structure. The University is moving from a Faculty or 'Centre' – based system to 'Colleges' where centres working in similar areas will group together.

As a centre based at the ANU, APHCRI is no different and has now become part of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences.

This will have no impact on our research teams and will only affect our internal operations. The aim of the College structure change is to improve the efficiency of our operations within the University.

Information on the College of Medicine and Health Sciences can be found at <http://cmhs.anu.edu.au/>

ELECTRONIC DATA FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE OUTCOMES

Dr Chris Kelman has led a program of investigative research to discover all significant available Australian electronic data collections relevant to primary health care evaluation, including those held by the Commonwealth and State/Territory health departments and institutions.

A report, including a brief summary of the potential relevance of these data to primary care outcomes research and a 'how to' guide to assist researchers in locating and accessing data has been compiled.

The database is available on the APHCRI website and researchers are invited to contribute to it and comment on the information provided.

http://www.anu.edu.au/aphcri/PHC_Database/PHC_Database_Index.php

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE AND READINESS FOR SCHOOL

Karen Gardner

A small team at APHCRI will be looking at primary health care and early child development. Karen Gardner, Shawn Lyons, Associate Professor Beverly Sibthorpe and Professor Nicholas Glasgow will build on Stream Four methodology to examine the contribution of organised primary health care approaches to childhood developmental health and wellbeing outcomes related to readiness for school in children from birth to five years.

The project has two components which include a systematic review and synthesis of literature relating to (a) the major developmental health issues that underpin readiness for school in children from birth to five years, known to be amenable to primary health care intervention; and (b) best practice approaches in organised primary health care for addressing these major developmental health issues in Australia and comparator countries, including the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada.

A review of the strategies, institutional arrangements and linkages currently being used to support these responses will then be carried out in order to examine what sorts of strategies could be useful in the Australian setting.

The project begins this month and will be completed in August 2007. A Reference Group is currently being established to support the project with expertise in the areas of research, policy and practice.

Let us know about your research events and developments so we can inform all our Spokes on your progress. Contact Frith .Rayner@anu.edu.au