

The power of renaming

Australian Family Physician evolves into Australian Journal of General Practice

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What's in a name?

That which we call a rose

By any other word would smell as sweet.¹

In 2018, we celebrate the renaming of *Australian Family Physician (AFP)*, Australia's premier MEDLINE-listed, peer-reviewed scientific journal of general practice, to *Australian Journal of General Practice (AJGP)*. What does a name signify? John Stuart Mills noted that 'proper names are not connotative: they denote the individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals'.² Put simply, he suggested that a name linked to a specific person or object has no intrinsic meaning.

However, in everyday parlance, the name we attach to a specific person or object is interrelated with meaning. For example, in Japan, renaming schizophrenia with an alternative word 'has effectively reduced stigma levels toward this disorder in adults'.³ With increasing recognition of the power of naming, there are ongoing vigorous debates on the renaming of other diseases. For example, should polycystic ovarian disease with metabolic sequelae have a different name to the primarily reproductive version?⁴ Should a more appropriate name be coined for non-communicable disease, the principal cause of death in countries with advanced economies?⁵

General practice manages diseases across the clinical spectrum through patient-centred, holistic care, and has been a key element of the Australian healthcare system for more than 60 years. In 1951, the proposal by Fraser Rose and John Hunt was a critical step in the 1952 formation of

the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) in the UK.⁶ The Australian state-based membership organisation of the RCGP collectively created the Australian College of General Practitioners in 1958, which became The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) on receipt of a Royal charter in 1969.⁷

The rapid rise in the development, expansion, consolidation and maturation of general practice as a distinct clinical discipline in Australia has been recorded since 1956 through the members' own science-based journal of record. Initially titled *The Annals of General Practice*, the name was changed to *Australian Family Physician (AFP)* in 1971. The term 'family physician' was adopted to distinguish between doctors with specialised knowledge and skills choosing a formal career in primary healthcare and those with only a basic medical degree.⁸ Similarly, the first formal training program for general practitioners (GPs), established in 1973 and funded by the federal government, was titled the Family Medicine Program.

Since then, general practice as a unique discipline has advanced exponentially, culminating in the formal recognition as a distinct specialty in Australia that is on par with other traditional specialties. Specifically, the specialty is titled 'general practice' rather than 'family medicine'. Consequently, as the *raison d'être* for the term 'family medicine' no longer exists, *AFP* now progresses into *AJGP*. Renaming the journal focuses our attention that general practice is now formally recognised as a discrete and unique discipline. In line with all other medical specialties, the 'coming of age' of general practice parallels the pace, strength and depth of general practice research, with *AJGP* a key facilitator for publication and dissemination of this important work.

Together with you, our loyal readers and supporters, I look forward to our ongoing journey where *AJGP* will continue the long-established tradition of *AFP* in providing informative, contextual information that supports you in ensuring your patients have the best possible outcomes.

Author

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