

General practice research: A call to action

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THIS EDITION of the journal focuses on an issue of vital importance both for Australian general practice and for general practice internationally – general practice research. The focus is part of an emerging trend as governments around the world, spurred on by the World Health Organization,¹ recognise the importance of primary care to the health and economic wellbeing of communities. To be effective, primary care must be evidence based, and for it to be evidence based, research must be done in primary care. Gone are the days when we in primary care could rely on hospital-based evidence, which is rarely generalisable to the primary care setting.² We must continue to build our own research capacity, generating research in general practice for general practice.

The reasons for this are many. This edition of *AJGP* includes articles building evidence on delivery of primary care training,^{3,4} which is essential for the development of the general practice workforce. Articles on clinical issues⁵ and health systems^{6–8} draw attention to ways to improve clinical practice and its settings. Finally, of course, research implies research training, and there is an article on postgraduate training as it applies to general practitioners (GPs).⁹

These articles go beyond providing data from general practice, which has been a previous focus. We now realise that to interpret general practice data we need to have a thorough understanding of the geographical and other contexts, populations, needs (eg focus on prevention, chronic disease management, a rapidly growing

older population with multimorbidity), emerging questions and limitations of the general practice setting. This cannot be done effectively without leadership and involvement from GPs themselves.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is committed to supporting general practice research, both through the National RACGP Expert Committee–Research (REC-R) and the Australian General Practice Research Foundation (the philanthropic arm of the RACGP). RACGP’s vision is to ‘cultivate and lead a culture of research in general practice’.¹⁰ The new RACGP Research Strategy¹⁰ provides a roadmap to achieve this vision. The strategy aims to build a supportive environment, systems and infrastructure for ethical and high-quality general practice research and translation. This will strengthen education, policy and practice, and it will help keep Australia healthy.

GPs, and the communities they serve, are at the heart of this strategy. As such, this strategy calls us all to action if we are to successfully grow our evidence base and make a difference to our communities – whether that is providing evidence-based care, leading a quality-improvement project, recruiting patients for studies or conducting research ourselves.

We also commend the work done by our Departments of General Practice, practice-based research networks, universities and other research institutes, and we know that collaboration will be key to achieving our vision.

The time is now for us to collectively strengthen general practice research and translation. As you read through this issue, we encourage you to consider how you can

be involved in supporting and using research in general practice – and helping to create a better tomorrow.

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