NEW PRACTICE NURSE RESEARCH FELLOWS
JOIN THE PARTY!

PARTY’S TWO NEW ADDITIONS

The PARTY project has just recruited two Practice Nurse Research Fellows to conduct research projects as part of the PARTY Practice Nurse study on a 0.5 FTE basis.

Verity Newnham RN (pictured right), already working as a Research Assistant with PARTY, has considerable experience with adolescent and health policy and now adds another dimension to her role.

Judy Evans RN (pictured left), has extensive experience as a practice nurse in primary care, especially with young people, and is very enthusiastic about the opportunity for her involvement in research.

The positions have been funded through the budget measure More Practice Nurses and Allied Health Workers for Urban Areas of Workforce Shortage, with Fellows receiving research training, support and experience through the Australian Government’s Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) Strategy. PHCRED aims to increase research capacity in primary health care.

The practice nurse component of the PARTY project is looking at the learning needs of practice nurses in adolescent health. In particular, it is interested in the barriers or enablers for effective practice with adolescents, and the role of practice nurses in linking with other community agencies looking after ‘high risk’ youth.

The Practice Nurse Fellows will both be conducting individual research projects and participating in a number of professional development activities to further enhance their competencies in primary health care research, such as attending conferences and seminars and completing a distance education research unit supported by the Department of General Practice at The University of Melbourne.

The PARTY Project in 100 Words or Less

At PARTY, we are always looking for simple and effective ways of describing our complex project to the variety of our stakeholders, including; GPs and practice staff, policy-makers, academics and of course, young people. Here is our best effort to date...

The five-year PARTY project will use a type of research called a randomised controlled trial to test the effectiveness of health risk screening and counselling for young people attending general practices for health care. This project will also assess the feasibility of practice nurses performing this role, as well as models of practice nurse engagement with other health, education and welfare providers, to support the access of higher risk young people to general practice. In addition, PARTY will be looking at ways of making general practice more ‘youth-friendly’ and will conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the entire project.

How did we do?????
PARTY BEYONDBLUE PRACTICE NURSE STUDY: A 12 MONTH PILOT

The PARTY Practice Nurse pilot study, funded by beyondblue, is an integral part of the overall PARTY project and forms a substantial part of the activities in the first 12 months of the project.

The role and efficacy of the practice nurse (PN) in primary care has been well-established in the UK, US and NZ and a review of available research has shown that nurses can achieve health outcomes that are as good as those of GPs often with superior interpersonal skills.1 In Australian general practice, the role of the PN is evolving, with around 40% of practices having a PN.2 Current PN roles cover four main domains: clinical care, organisation, administration and integration (‘linkage’).3

The objectives of the PARTY PN study are to design and pilot (1) a general practice nurse led intervention for improving the pathways to care for youth at high-risk of depression or related disorders and (2) a continuous quality improvement cycle for achieving the organisational change necessary to support preventive mental health care for youth in the general practice setting.

This project is highly significant for facilitating pathways of care for depressed and high-risk youth to and from primary care, general medical and specialist mental health systems.

Progress to date has included conducting a literature review, interviews with all the projects’ key informants and distributing the PARTY Practice Nurse survey. The PARTY PN working group are currently organising focus groups and developing a training intervention for practice nurses.


So...why PARTY?

Psychosocial issues form the greatest burden of disease for young people including accidents and injury, tobacco, alcohol, other substance use, unprotected sexual intercourse and mental health disorders. Harm resulting from such risk-taking behaviours is preventable. Young people would like to discuss health issues with clinicians and trust their advice, yet they experience barriers to disclosing their risky behaviours unless prompted.

There are promising models for risk screening and brief counselling during wellness visits in primary care (US and UK) - including roles for the practice nurse. However, in some studies, opportunistic screening has been shown to be superior to planned wellness visits in detecting health risk.

Gaps in evidence exist for effective models of screening and counselling in our health care system, particularly involving the practice nurse. Similarly there is a global lack of quality economic evaluations of such interventions.

General practice is the most frequently and easily accessed health service for Australian young people, yet even those with psychosocial problems, visit annually for physiological reasons. Hence, general practice seems ideally placed to identify hidden health risks early, as well as assessing and providing individually targeted health promotion, counselling or referral of young people with more complex needs.

Dr Lena Sanci
Why Adolescent Health?

“I was in my second year post-graduation (1990), in GP training, when a troubled and seemingly uncommunicative 15 year old girl consulted with her anxious, talkative mother. It struck me that I had no framework, from medical training, for dealing with adolescents (and parents) and didn’t know where to take the consultation other than a physical evaluation of some nebulous somatic complaints – not very engaging for the girl.

My initial 6-month residency in adolescent health surprisingly evolved into a decade-long academic career helping to fill the gap in competency I initially experienced - having a framework for dealing effectively with adolescents in primary care.

With her colleagues at the Centre for Adolescent Health, Lena has been an advocate for improved health services for youth including confidential health care.

On the horizon...

“Whilst all medical students now receive training in adolescent health there is still much to be done on policy and practical levels to ensure adolescents have access to appropriate health care in various settings. More research is urgently needed to test the effectiveness of clinical interventions for adolescents.”

The PARTY Team would also like to welcome their other new addition and congratulate Lena and Peter on the arrival of little Chloe Rose.