YOUTH HEALTH A KEY PRIORITY OF THE PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH UNIT (PCRU)

INTRODUCING THE NEW PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH UNIT

Youth Health, along with Chronic Disease and Primary Care Mental Health, has been identified as one of three key areas of research focus for the new Primary Care Research Unit (PCRU). The Unit was established in early 2006 at the Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne, and is chaired by the Department’s own Professor Jane Gunn. PCRU will support; capacity-building in clinical research, primary care systems research and translational research (getting research into practice).

PCRU’s vision is to be a national and international centre of excellence in primary care research known for: multi-method, rigorous research programs; strong national and international collaborative research; and training for research higher degrees.

Professor Jane Gunn explained “The Primary Care Research Unit draws together the research teams within the Department who represent a wide variety of clinical and research backgrounds. The social model of health, the doctor-patient relationship, and the primary care team are all embedded firmly within our work.

“Our Department is well recognised on the international stage for producing quality research in the area of youth health and primary health care. The funding of PARTY and our work in mental health and Chlamydia research is building on this evidence base.

“PCRU will provide support and capacity-building to adolescent health research projects within the Department while investing in early career development of future leaders in adolescent health research,” Professor Gunn concluded.

PCRU will also be building a Community Practice Based Research Network (PBRN), with funding from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. The aim of the PBRN is to establish firmer links with general practitioners and community-based health care providers to facilitate clinical and translational research. The PCRU hosted a Foundation Dinner to launch the PBRN in July 2006.

For more information about the PCRU and PBRN, please contact Hayley Shaw at the Department of General Practice on 8344 9050 or by e-mail: h.shaw@unimelb.edu.au.

ATTENTION: NEW DATE

Ms Brenda Grabsch
PARTY Research Fellow & Project Coordinator
“PARTY in Progress: an update”
Friday August 4th, 2006 1 - 2pm, Ground Floor Lecture Theatre
Dept of General Practice, University of Melbourne, 200 Berkeley Street Carlton.
The 2006 General Practice & Primary Health Care Research Conference was held in Perth from Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th July. The 2006 theme, “Optimising Impact”, followed on from the 2005 Conference theme, “Getting research right for policy and practice”.

The conference contained a mix of international and local keynote speakers, panel and plenary sessions as well as concurrent sessions and poster presentations. The Department of General Practice’s PARTY project was well represented through the PARTY poster presentation and the participation of project staff in conference events, such as the Youth Health Research Interest Group’s (YHRIG) breakfast.

THE PARTY POSTER PRESENTATION

The Primary Care PARTY Project will be strategic in providing the first evidence for effective primary care models of screening and preventive counselling which can be incorporated directly into existing practice structures and integrated with Federal and State health practice incentives, as well as being acceptable to Australian youth, parents, GPs and PNs.

Furthermore, it will be the first Australian study to describe the feasibility of the PN in youth preventive and early intervention primary care, and the first such intervention study to incorporate an economic evaluation.
Adolescent Health Breakfast hosted by the Youth Health Research Interest Group (YHRIG)

The Youth Health Research Interest Group (YHRIG) is a Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) funded network of primary care youth health researchers which was formed in 2002. YHRIG currently supports the development of quality and strategic research in adolescent health in primary care through building research capacity, fostering professional development opportunities, supporting education and advocacy initiatives and identifying research gaps.

The breakfast consisted of a welcoming address by Dr Carol Kefford, YHRIG spokesperson, who discussed YHRIG’s background, aims & objectives, achievements to date and future directions. Carol also provided an overview of research projects being carried out by current YHRIG members and invited breakfast attendees to share information about their own youth health projects. Brief project presentations were also made by Dr Lena Sanci, Dr Dagmar Haller-Hester and PARTY Practice Nurse Research Fellows, Verity Newnham and Judy Evans. The questions and subsequent discussion that followed the breakfast presentations supported the need for timely dissemination of adolescent health research outcomes to the youth health sector to prevent reinventing the wheel and for translation into practice.

Dr Carol Kefford explained, “YHRIG hopes to keep improvements in young peoples' health high on the research agenda. Healthy young people are our most important resource for the future.”

Emerging Themes from PARTY Practice Nurse Interviews

PARTY’s qualitative researcher, Dr Rhian Parker, has been busy in recent months conducting a focus group and one-on-one interviews with Primary Care Nurses (PNs) from metropolitan, rural and regional Victoria. This work has been undertaken as part of the PARTY Practice Nurse Study funded by beyondblue.

This new information builds upon practice nurse data collected in December and early 2006, through a series of interviews with key PARTY stakeholders such as the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) and specialist adolescent health providers.

The PNs, interviewed as part of the PARTY study, were asked about the barriers to expanding their current role to incorporate a greater adolescent health focus. The nurses were also asked about their role in establishing links between their general practice and community services and adolescent health care providers. The interview transcripts are currently being analysed and some early themes have begun to emerge.

“The practice nurses I spoke to were receptive to expanding their current role into adolescent preventative health. This appears to be largely influenced by the capacity of the nurses to provide a service that young people perceived as being confidential and non-judgemental, as well as to link and liaise with other service providers.

“Access to Medicare bulk-billing, and the lack of funding for nursing adolescent health services under the current Medicare system, was a significant barrier for nurses to work effectively with young people.

The role of the practice nurse in providing linkages and referral pathways for young people was identified by the nurses as extremely important but time consuming.

“It was clear that nurses undertake a diverse and large number of tasks and their ability to respond to young people, in a way that young people find appropriate, requires time,” Dr Parker concluded.
When can a young person have their own Medicare card?

Young people who are Australian citizens or hold a permanent residency visa can apply for their own Medicare card, separate from their parent’s card, when they are 15 years old. A young person wanting their own Medicare card would need to complete a Medicare Copy/Transfer Application form which is available from local Medicare Offices and some chemists and general practices. The application needs to be supported with documentation such as a birth certificate, passport or visa to establish identity as well as two forms of documentation to establish that they are living in Australia, examples include bills, learner’s permit and bank statements.

Further information about the application process, advice on eligible documentation and a downloadable application form, can be found on the Medicare Australia website at: [http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au). Young people can also phone the Medicare Australia toll free phone number on 13 20 11.

PARTY PROFILE: BRENDA GRABSCH

Ms Brenda Grabsch
Research Fellow & Project Coordinator
Primary Care PARTY Project

“Co-ordinating the PARTY Project will be exciting and challenging. What is important, however, is that the outcomes from the study have meaning, and practical impact, beyond the academic world. PARTY has that potential.”

About Brenda

Brenda Grabsch joined the Department of General Practice, The University of Melbourne, in September 2005. Her varied career commenced after taking her initial degree in science and working in laboratory-based research. Brenda subsequently qualified as a social worker and gained diverse casework and family counselling experience working for several years in local government and community agencies. In these roles the issues facing young people were often on the agenda. She also taught fieldwork skills to social work students at Monash University. Since the completion of a Graduate Diploma in Human Services Research, Brenda has worked on a number of social and health sciences research studies including a family literacy project (Latrobe University) and a psycho-oncology project (University of Melbourne) which she co-ordinated for nine years.

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