THE ACADEMIC UNIT OF GENERAL PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY CARE

Annual Report 2000-2003

DESCRIPTION

The Academic Unit of General Practice and Community Care (the Unit) began as an initiative of ACT Community Care and the Canberra Clinical School of the University of Sydney in 1997. The Unit is a community resource committed to providing excellence in health education, research and service.

Since its establishment, the Unit has made extensive contributions not only to the delivery of the University of Sydney's Medical Program to Canberra-based medical students, but has also made teaching contributions to junior medical officers, vocational trainees, and practicing doctors' Continuing Medical Education programs. The Unit has developed research activities that encompass child health, integrated service development, clinical research, individual routes to health and healing, social determinants of medical care, and scholarship in teaching and learning. Clinical service has been provided by the Unit in general practice, drug and alcohol medicine, palliative medicine and refugee medicine. In addition, the Unit has contributed to policy development within the Australian Capital Territory and wider Australian health service through committee work and communication of its research findings.

The Unit provides key support to the educational programs of the new Australian National University Medical School (ANUMS). This medical school has a Rural and Community Clinical School within its structures that is continuing to build on the networks developed by the Unit. The ANUMS has a significant focus on community and rural health. The University of Sydney's involvement in the ACT will cease in 2006.

Funds from ACT Community Care, ACT Department of Health, ANUMS, as well as competitive and non-competitive grants from various sources support the activities of the Unit.

OBJECTIVE

The Unit's objective is to provide four key resources to the community:

1. ***Teaching*** Related to general practice and community health.

2. ***Research*** Related to general practice and community health, including audit and evaluation.

3. ***Service*** Including both clinical services in general practice and community health, and administrative/committee/other service relevant to the joint venture partners.

4. ***Networking*** Promoting collaboration among health care providers within the community and between community health care providers and the hospital sector.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2002-2003

Teaching

- Establishment of the Rural and Community Clinical School at ANU Medical School.
- Delivery of teaching to University of Sydney Medical Program Students, vocational trainees and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) participants.
- Review of the teaching capacity within ACT General Practices.

Research

- Successful National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant for the ACT Bedding Study.
- Publication of three original research articles in peer reviewed journals. Three others accepted for publication.
- Six members of the Unit have presented their research works at 16 conferences, both international and national.
- Consolidation of role as evaluators for the ACT Division of General Practice (3 project evaluations funded) and as an advisory resource for the clinical units within the ACT Department of Health.
- Commencement of ACT Women's Chlamydia Study with 27 general practitioners in the ACT.

Service

- Establishment of the first Regional Refugees Services Network in NSW.
- Ongoing program of monitoring children's health through kindergarten screening with ACT Community Health Maternal and Child Health nurses.

Networking

- Organised and conducted an Obesity Seminar for the ACT on behalf of the Chief Medical Officer.
- Contribution to clearer understanding of services for asthma care in the ACT through Care Continuum Study and release of professional and patient resource materials produced by the Unit.

STAFF

Academic Faculty and Research Staff
Associate Professor Nicholas Glasgow, Head
BHB, MBChB, GradDipFam.Med (Monash) MD, FRNZCGP, FRACGP, FAChPM, GradCertEdStudies (Sydney)
Dr Christine Phillips, Senior Lecturer
MBBS, BMedSc, DipEd, MPH, MA, FRACGP
Dr Kirsty Douglas, Senior Lecturer
MBBS, DipRACOG, MD, FRACGP
Dr Clare McGuiness, Senior Lecturer
BMed DipRACOG, MAE (ANU), FRACGP, PhD (ANU)
Dr Helen Toyne, Senior Registrar
MBBS, DipRACOG, FRACGP
Dr Jennifer Blaylock, Academic Registrar, Associate Clinical Lecturer
MBBS (Hons), BSc, DipEd, G.Cert Mgmt
Dr Sittampalam Ragavan, Lecturer
MBBS (Colombo), M Prax Med (Medunsa), DTM&H (Wits), Dip PEC (SA), DHSM (Wits), DPH (Wits), FACRRM, FRACGP
Dr Tracy Soh, Lecturer
MBBS (WA), FRACGP, Grad. Cert. Ethics & Leg. Stud. (Charles Sturt)
Rachel Yates, Research Manager
BTec (Med Lab Sci), BSci Hons (Psych)
Karen Ciszek, Research Nurse
RNRM
Administrative Staff

Jenny Jackson

Rural Manager

Sam Morgan
Executive Support to A/Prof

Finance and Administration Manager

Kerrin Schmidt

Administration

Dorothy Parkitny

Administration

Julie Clark

ACT Asthma Bedding Study Officer

Clinical Faculty

Dr Glynn Kelly

MBBS (Hons), Cert.Ed. M.Med (M.F.M) (Monash) FRACGP

TEACHING

University of Sydney Medical Program

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Christine Phillips, Dr Kirsty Douglas, Dr Helen Toyne, Dr Jennifer Blaylock and Jenny Jackson.

Student Placement Supervisors:

Dr Bob Allan, Dr Phillip Barraclough, Dr Michelle Barrat, Dr Ian Brown, Dr Robert Cox, Dr Peter Davis, Dr Steve Mendick, Dr Tanya Robertson, Dr Stan Doumai, Dr Phillip Gray, Dr Glynn Kelly, Dr Julie Hewitt, Dr David Cheah, Dr Sandra Hogg, Dr Bernard Leung, Dr Ian Pryor, Dr Rashmi Sharma, Dr Carol Lance, Dr Peter Sharp, Dr Tuck Meng Soo, Dr Clare Willington, Dr Neena Sood, Dr Gavin Sukamar, Dr Michael Tedeschi, Dr Cam Webber, Dr Jung Li-Qui, Dr Conrad Goonerage, Dr Jennifer Bromley, Dr Murray Barrell, Dr John Berick, Dr Lachlan Brown, Dr Stephen Murray, Dr Hugh Humphrys, Dr Stephen Ross, Dr Virginia Wrice, Dr Paul Mara, Dr Craig Corr, Dr Rob Wiles, Dr Danny Stewart, Dr Marjorie Cross, Dr Rob Morton, Dr Bruce Gerard, Dr Ian Hutchins, Dr John Eagan, Dr Sue Storrier, Dr Brenda Tait, Dr Duncan McKinnon, Dr Simon Bass, Dr Steve Myers and Dr Tony Whelan.

The Unit's teaching is supported by general practitioners from Canberra and surrounding regions. The core teaching responsibility is to medical students of the Canberra Clinical School, University of Sydney. Members from the Unit are involved in teaching in the first, third and fourth years of the University of Sydney Graduate Medical Program. Major contributions are made to the Community Doctor theme and in Evidence Based Medicine. The Unit coordinates all rural placements both in the community (general practices) and hospitals (integrated clinical attachments) for the third and fourth years. Relationships with key stakeholders involved in the Community Term are developed and maintained in the following ways:

- Approaching and engaging new practices to supervise students.
- Providing current supervisors with a General Practice Supervisor's Handbook.
- Contributing to a newsletter, *The GP Teacher* circulated to all supervisors.
- Providing student feedback to each supervisor at the completion of each placement.
- Liaising closely with the South East NSW Division of General Practice regarding student placements and accommodation issues.
- Visiting practices whilst each student is on placement.
- Providing information evenings for urban general practitioners.

Development of the Australian National University Medical School

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Kirsty Douglas, Dr Christine Phillips, Dr Helen Toyne, Dr Clare McGuiness and Jenny Jackson.

This exciting and long awaited development of a local Medical School has been a major focus for the Unit's teaching staff over the past year. A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow has been appointed Associate Dean, Rural and Community. The Senior Lecturers have served on multiple curriculum development committees and the Unit has co-ordinated (with the ACT Division of General Practice) the involvement of GP's on each curriculum development committee. A major study of local resources within the ACT has been undertaken (see EARS study below).

There have been two major achievements in the development of rural resources in the South East NSW region.
The first is the establishment of a Clinical Education Unit for both the nursing and medical programs at the Bega District Hospital. This project was funded by the University of Wollongong Nursing Program and the Australian National University Medical School. The Unit has been refurbished and now houses a tutorial room, lecture room, kitchen, study and clinical area. Development of these facilities has consolidated the relationship between the two universities.

Secondly, an assessment of student educational resources and facilities at all hospitals in the Southern Area Health Service has been carried out. This project was undertaken in collaboration with Southern Area Health Service. Resources assessed at each hospital were; internet access, accommodation, availability of a lecture style room, a tutorial room, space for students to study, library and video conferencing facilities.

Related Educational Activities

General Practice Registrar Teaching

The Unit is one of the central players in the local consortium to provide general practice registrar training in the Canberra and South East NSW Regions. General Practice Education Australia and CoastCityCounty Training Ltd contracted Dr Douglas, Dr Phillips and A/Prof Glasgow to conduct many of the registrar teaching sessions over the last year. These doctors have also worked as medical educators, providing external clinical tutoring to registrars in the region.

Continuing Education for practicing GPs

Staff in the Unit were contracted by the Department of Health and Ageing to write three modules for a web-based training program on critical thinking in medical practice.

Development of Academic General Practice

The Unit employs Dr Toyne and Dr Blaylock as Academic Registrars and recently Dr Ragavan and Dr Soh as Lecturers with ANUMS. These positions give general practitioners the opportunity to work and gain skills in a research and teaching environment. Current projects include:

1. The ACT Women's Chlamydia Study in collaboration with The Canberra Hospital.
2. Preparation towards research into the role of glycemic index in prevention of Type 2 Diabetes.
3. The potential use of patient held diabetes management records, a project about improving quality of life care and health for people with Type 2 Diabetes.
4. An evaluation of the subsidised access to psychologist services.

SERVICE

The Unit provides clinical services in three areas:

- General practice (A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Douglas, Dr Phillips, Dr Toyne and Dr McGuiness).
- Palliative care at Clare Holland House (A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow).
- Refugee health care at Companion House (Dr Phillips).

The Unit offers advice and consultation on clinical and other health issues as requested. Staff provide expert advice to a broad range of committees within ACT Community Care, Canberra Clinical School, University of Sydney, The Canberra Hospital and other health and community-based organisations. The Unit provides expert representation on the Corrections Health Board and provides input into the delivery of opiate dependence services and cervical screening services. As part of her work with Companion House, Dr Phillips has helped set up Australia's first regional refugee services network, the Riverina/Greater Murray Refugee Health Services Network. When requested, the Unit also contributes to ACT Department of Health and Community Care, advice on co-ordination, planning and delivery of health services to increase quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

NETWORK FACILITATION

A central role of the Unit is to provide a link between the different parts of the health system in the ACT and rural NSW, the Canberra Clinical School, University of Sydney and the Australian National University. To achieve this, the Unit makes itself available to organisations that request input from its staff. The staffs' diverse professional interests and expertise enhance this process. Collaboration between different parts of the community and the health system continues to be emphasised and developed by the Unit. Although much of this is achieved through opportunities arising from committee work, the results of collaboration are evident in all areas of the Unit's work.

Obesity Seminar

Dr Kirsty Douglas, Kerrin Schmidt.

At the request of the Chief Medical Officer, the Unit organised an Obesity Seminar for the ACT in October 2002. This event brought together a range of key stakeholders from the community interested in collaborative efforts to address the issue of obesity in the ACT. The seminar included a series of presentations outlining the size and scope of the issue and included some of the innovative projects and programs currently underway to promote healthier eating and physical activity in the ACT. Dr Douglas presented data on childhood obesity from the Kindergarten Screening. The seminar was successful in raising greater awareness of overweight and obesity in the ACT, communicating relevant local issues and providing representatives from local organisations an opportunity to establish cross-sectoral relationships for networking.

RESEARCH

The main focus of the Unit's research continues to be childhood asthma, however our research areas are broadening to include a variety of primary health care issues. These projects are detailed below.

ACT Childhood Asthma Collaboration

The Collaboration was launched in November 1999 by Mr Michael Moore MLA, ACT Minister for Health. These projects are supported by ACT Community Care, The Financial Markets Foundation for Children, NHMRC, ACT Department of Health and Ageing and the ACT Department of Health and Community Care. The Collaboration includes the following projects:

- The Childhood Respiratory Symptom Surveillance Project.
- A Survey of Respiratory Health and Chronic Disease in all ACT Primary School Children.
- An Evaluation of the National Asthma Campaign's 3+ Visit Plan.
- The ACT Childhood Asthma Care Continuum Project.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Respiratory Health.
- ACT Asthma Bedding Study.
- Asthma Innovative Management Project.

The Childhood Respiratory Symptom Surveillance Project

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Anne-Louise Ponsonby, Rachel Yates and Karen Ciszek.

This project began in 1998 as a three-year research project examining the value of screening for asthma and respiratory symptoms in new entrant primary school children in the ACT (a population of approximately 4500 children) using a questionnaire. In April 2001, results from a validation sub-study of the project were published in the Medical Journal of Australia showing the questionnaire to be a feasible screening instrument with good sensitivity and specificity (Glasgow et al. MJA 174 384 - 388).

Current Status: The questionnaire is now used on an ongoing basis as part of the ACT Health school screening program. Data from the questionnaire continues to be collected and analysed enabling asthma and other health trends in the ACT to be monitored over time. This data has formed the basis of a range of academic publications and national research presentations over the last several years. It has also advised the Chief Health Officer's report regarding 4-6 year old children's asthma status in the ACT. Ongoing analysis of this dataset continues with publications pending.

An Evaluation of the National Asthma Campaign's 3+ Visit Plan in 5 – 11 year old children in the ACT

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Anne-Louise Ponsonby, Rachel Yates, Dr Paul Dugdale, Dr Justin Beilby and Karen Ciszek.

This 12-month trial, which commenced in May 2000, was the first randomized-controlled trial to assess both the health and economic effects of the 3+ visit plan – a pro-active review system for asthma management developed by the National Asthma Council. It involved 24 Canberra GPs and 174 ACT primary school children and used a variety of measures to look at childhood asthma health outcomes.

Current Status: The field work and preliminary analysis for the main outcomes of this trial was completed in 2002. These results have formed the basis of a number of national and international publications and presentations, (e.g. Glasgow et al. Primary Care Respiratory Journal 2002;11(2):59, A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow et al, British Medical Journal, accepted for publication in July 2003). Ongoing analysis of this comprehensive dataset continues with further publications pending.

The ACT Asthma Care Continuum Project

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Paul Dugdale, Dr Anne-Louise Ponsonby and Coralie Mathews.

Following the launch last year, the project was externally evaluated by Professor Robyn Penman with an overall positive outcome.

Current Status: The oversight for the project is now with the Asthma Reference Group.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Respiratory Health

Dr Libby Goodchild, A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Rachel Yates and Dr Anne-Louise Ponsonby.

This sub-study used data from the *Survey of Respiratory Health and Chronic Disease in all ACT Primary School Children* and the *Childhood Respiratory Symptom Surveillance Project* to examine patterns of respiratory health reported in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander urban community in the ACT.

Current Status: A paper based on the results of this work was accepted for publication in early 2003 by The Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health. This work was also presented at national forums in November 2002 and June 2003.

ACT Asthma Bedding Study

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Anne-Louise Ponsonby, Prof Andrew Kemp, Prof Paul Gatenby, Dr Euan Tovey, Dr Jennifer Peat, Julie Clark, Beverley Dunn, Allison Cutting, Karen Ciszek and Ivan Hannigan.

A randomised controlled trial is being conducted in collaboration with the Australian National University, Canberra Clinical School, University of Sydney and the Children's Hospital, Westmead. This study aims to build on recent evidence provided by observational epidemiology that different types of upper bedding are associated with a reduction in respiratory morbidity. The potential of this study to advance environmental preventative strategies for child asthma is high and the area is of large public health importance. Initial funding from the Children's Financial Markets was followed by a successful NHMRC grant submission in 2002.

Current Status: There are 67 participants fully enrolled in the study in Canberra. Recruitment will continue in Sydney until 200 participants are enrolled.

Asthma Innovative Management Project

Rachel Yates, Karen Ciszek and A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow.

In June 2002, the Unit was successful in obtaining Commonwealth funding for a twelve-month project to examine the hospital - general practitioner interface in people attending ACT emergency departments (EDs) recurrently for asthma. The project was implemented at Calvary Hospital and The Canberra Hospital in September 2002. It included the development of tools and materials to help move ED asthma patients towards optimal asthma management by both increasing patients' awareness of their need for regular GP asthma review and increasing communication between hospital EDs and the general practice sector regarding such patients. The project also looked at obstacles to optimal asthma management in the ACT through a series of focus groups and interviews with project participants.

Current Status: The project concluded in June 2003 with a final report submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing in July. An internal report was also submitted in November 2002. Project results include: the identification of barriers to optimal asthma care in the ACT; improved hospital-GP information exchange about patients' asthma presentations'; positive feedback about the project materials developed, especially the patient asthma information sheet and the patient asthma action plan; a request was made for the project to be continued on an ongoing basis at Calvary Hospital.

OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS

Montelukast (Singulair) Study

A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dr Kam Sinn and Karen Ciszek.

The Unit is taking part in a multi-centre Australia-based study of montelukast (an asthma medication) among children. The study enrolled 17 children in Canberra.

Current Status: Trial recruitment finished in January 2002. All participants completed their participation in January 2003. Analysis has commenced, with preliminary results available later in 2003.

Evaluation of the Health Partners Project

Dr Clare McGuiness, Dr Christine Phillips and A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow.

The Health Partners project is a partnership between ACT Division of General Practice, Arthritis Foundation ACT, ACT Community Care and the Health Care Consumers Association of the ACT aiming to support people to better manage their chronic health conditions. The Unit is conducting the evaluation including focus groups and questionnaire based approaches. The ACT project contributes to a national program examining models for supporting people with multiple chronic conditions. Data is collated centrally to inform the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing regarding the value of self management initiatives, and it is hoped this will facilitate use of already budgeted funds coming into the Territory.

Current Status: Evaluation work to date has included a series of focus groups with project participants and health service providers, as well as leaders of the course. The target recruitment of 250 participants was met and they have attended a six-session group course on managing their chronic conditions. The impact of the education and its effect on the use of health services and changes in self-reported health status will be reported in the coming year.

Research Capacity Building

Dr Clare McGuiness, Dr Sittampalam Ragavan.

Funding continued from the University of Sydney for initiatives to support the interest, education and knowledge of general practitioners about research within the ACT and South East NSW regions. Two day-long seminars on Research and Evaluation methods were held in the ACT and the South East NSW Regions at divisions of General Practice.

Current Status: The position for 2003 was contested for the first time, indicating the increasing awareness of research among general practitioners. From these interviews a further three GP's have been employed in the Unit on research activities.

Education and Research Study (EARS)

Dr Clare McGuiness, Dr Christine Phillips, Dr Kirsty Douglas, Dr Helen Toyne, A/Prof Nicholas Glasgow and Kerrin Schmidt.

The Unit secured funding from ANUMS to evaluate the capacity for ACT general practice to contribute to teaching in the Community Term and to the medical school overall. Over 60% of practices were visited with considerable interest shown by this workforce. The documentation of capacity has been helpful to accreditation of the new medical school as it prepares to commence in 2004.

Current Status: The report has been prepared and will be submitted to ANUMS.

Research Assistance

In addition to its core research projects, the Unit continues to contribute research skills to the wider community. Over the last twelve months the Unit has assisted with:

- Data analysis and presentation for the Diabetes Education Study (winner of the Pfizer prize for best oral presentation).
- A submission to the Academy of Social Sciences Research, ANU, on the role of social science research in "Healthy Australia".
- Advice in the evaluation of cardiac rehabilitation at Calvary Hospital.