

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Feasible or not?

Associate Professor Virginia Schmied from the School of Nursing and Midwifery is leading a team of researchers to investigate the feasibility of implementing a national approach to child and family health services for children aged zero to eight. This research is funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant in partnership with a number of state government and non-government organisations.

'Universal health services for children and families are inconsistent across Australia', says Associate Professor Schmied. 'The services are fragmented across the disciplines and sectors involved and often don't meet the community's needs. Research has shown that events during pregnancy and in the early years of life, and the quality of care received during these periods, strongly influence early development and adult life. In order to implement a national approach, significant change is likely to be required across policy, programs and service delivery and professional practice, so we will analyse local culture and factors that may act as enablers or barriers to implementing a national approach to universal child and family health services.'

The team will use a range of methods to find out about these "enablers and barriers", undertaking national consultative forums with consumer groups, specialist health service providers and professional associations/organisations; and a web based survey of 650 practitioners from a range of disciplines engaged in direct health service delivery. A set of focus groups with people who completed the survey will contribute to identifying the changes in services and professional practice required to implement a national approach.

The findings of this study will have immediate national application as federal, state and territory governments work towards implementing a national approach to universal child and family health services in Australia.



Project Title: A study investigating the feasibility of implementing a national approach to child and family health services

Funding has been set at: \$300,000

Contact Details: v.schmied@uws.edu.au

<http://www.uws.edu.au/nursing>

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Research Team and Partners: A/Prof Schmied & Prof I Wilson (UWS); A/Prof S Kruske, (CDU); Profs C Homer & C Fowler (UTS); Prof L Barclay (USyd); Dr L Kemp (UNSW), Adj. A/Prof A Fasher (The Practice, Blacktown NSW); Dr S Goldfield; Dr B Vernon (Australian College of Midwives); Ms C Randles (Australian Association of Maternal Child & Family Health Nurses), Australian General Practice Network, Australian Practice Nurses Association, Victorian Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, NT Department of Health & Families, NSW Department of Community Services, Qld Dept of Health, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, WA Department of Health.