

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Evaluating Practice Nurse Scholarships

Dr Elizabeth Halcomb from the Family and Community Health Research Group and Professor Patricia Davidson from Curtin University of Technology will evaluate the impact of scholarships on the quality of care and confidence of general practice nurses within Australia. This project has been funded by the Australian Department of Health & Aging through the Australian Practice Nurses Association (APNA).

'The role of a general practice nurse has evolved significantly in recent years' says Dr Halcomb. 'The practice nurse doesn't just give us our flu shots, but covers many specialist areas including, women's health, cardiovascular care, wound management and care plans and has become a key part of the primary-care workforce. To address some of these changes the APNA has developed the Practice Nurse Continuing Professional Development Scholarship to give practice nurses the ability to gain knowledge in different areas of the health care system. The scholarships are funded by the Australian Department of Health & Aging and are designed to improve nurses' ability to provide quality care, to feel more confident while providing that care and to implement new services in the practice which were not previously available'

The project team will be using a combination of interviews and surveys to gather data concerning the effects of the scholarship. Telephone interviews will be conducted with scholarship recipients to assess the impact of the program on the quality of care they provide. Surveys will also be emailed to all scholarship recipients to assess how the scholarships have impacted their confidence and their professional development within the nursing field. Interviews with GPs and practice managers will then be conducted in order to determine any changes to the work performed by practice nurses in the scholarship program.



Each data set will be analysed and integrated to form a detailed report about the impact of the APNA scholarships on the quality of care provide by practice nurses.

With a thorough assessment of this scholarship, the project team aims to identify the most beneficial aspects of the scholarship, and identify which areas need further development. Practice nurses are a central part of the primary health care workforce and are critical to improved outcomes for many Australians under the care of a general practitioner, ultimately benefiting the health care system as well its patients.

Project Title: Practice Nurse Continuing Professional Development Program Evaluation
Funding has been set at: \$44,000
Contact Details: e.halcomb@uws.edu.au
<http://www.uws.edu.au/fach>
December 2009