



## DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2020

### Welcome

Dear Colleagues

It is my great pleasure once again to welcome you to our six monthly newsletter. You will find this issue has a focus on student and alumni achievements – fittingly at this time of the year!

Megan Foo and George Nohra are worthy recipients of the Picton Family Medical Centre & Wollondilly Council Prize for Academic Excellence in General Practice and the Nick Collins Award. George's reflection on GP19 truly highlights the value of this ongoing award in memory of our colleague Dr Nick Collins.

We are also celebrating the successful roll out of our Year 1 placements. Thanks to our committed GP Supervisors, from 2020 we will be placing students across ALL years of our program. This has also required a great deal of additional work from our admin team as well as Drs Winston Lo and Lawrence Tan. As you will read – we believe it has been worth all the additional effort as our students have greatly valued their first clinical experience in the community and many supervisors have told us how much they and their patients enjoy having brand new medical students learning in the practice!

We were pleased to join with Sydney University to welcome GP Supervisors to a workshop in December and are taking the opportunity offered by visiting academics from the UK, Netherlands and Sri Lanka to learn about how primary health care works in these settings and also to preview work the Department has been leading, looking at indicators of high quality in Australian general practice. See our Supervisor pages for more information!



Our research is powering along and you will find in this newsletter a synopsis of our clinical trials and research on quality indicators as well as a snapshot of our student research this year.

Enjoy your New Year reading and wishing you a fulfilling and exciting year in 2020!

Warm Regards

Jenny Reath

**Professor Jenny Reath**  
**Peter Brennan Chair of General Practice**

### GP Conjoint

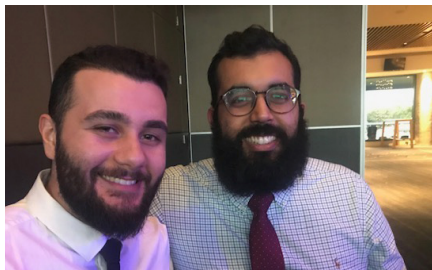
Thank you to all our GP Conjoins. We greatly value your commitment and contribution to our teaching and research activities here at Western Sydney University. If your name is not on this list your conjoint status may have expired. Please contact Vicki Bradley [v.bradley@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:v.bradley@westernsydney.edu.au) and she will assist you!

Dr Akber Alamyar, Dr Ali Alsamail, Dr Aline Smith, Dr Alison Lyon, Dr Andrew Knight, Dr Angela Kwok, Dr Anna Pham, Dr Aziz Zaman, Dr Billie Whiteson, Dr Bruce McGarity, Dr David Cosgriff, Dr David Le, Dr David Lim, Dr Deepa Garg, Dr Deepa Mahananda, Prof Diana O'Halloran, Dr Eshwar Madas, Dr Fatemeh (Mehrnoosh) Abdolalian, Dr Fiona MacKintosh, Dr Frank Keh, Dr Furio Virant, Dr Hani Bittar, Dr Hannah E.van Werven, Dr Ivan Parise, Dr James Aitken, Dr Jane Burges (Leete), Dr Jaspreet Saini, Dr Jenny James, Dr Joseph Lombardo, Dr Julie Ong, Dr Jurriaan Beek, Dr Kailanathan Ayngkaran, Dr Kam Cheung Glen Au-Yeung, Dr Ken McCroary, Dr Kenneth McCroary, Dr Kun Yun Kelvin Hon, Ms Letitia Campbell, Dr Ling Yoong, Dr Linda Brown, Dr Louise McDonnell, Dr Magdy Girgis, Dr Matthew Gray, Dr Michael Burke, A/Prof Michael Fasher, Dr Michael Phipps, Dr Michael Tran, Dr Milan Djukanovic, Dr Nyen Ling Yoong, Dr Olataga Alofiva-Doorbinnia, Dr Paul Fishburn, Dr Penny Burns, Dr Pat Romeo, Dr Philippa (Billie) Glass (Whiteson), Dr Rajkumar Rajalingam, Dr Ramesh Pillai, Dr Raymond Seeto, A/Prof Ronald Chin, Dr Ronald Yoon-King Chin, Dr Rosemary Isaacs, Dr Sanjay Kapuwatte, Dr Sarah Gani, Dr Sayeed Khan, Dr Stephen Hampton, Dr Suresh Nair, Dr Susan Sunwoo, Dr Sushil Anand, Dr Thomas Fung, Dr Tim Senior, Dr Tuan Quang Bui, Dr Walid Jammal, A/Prof Walter Kmet and Dr Yasin Shahab

# Update from the Department of General Practice

## CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

This is the season of conferences and we see WSU alumni at many of the events we attend these days. You will enjoy reading about our student presentations at **GP19** (page 4). Lawrence and Jenny were pleased to see Drs Nisha Garg and Johanna Chanmugam but unfortunately they escaped before we could snap them for the newsletter! Dr Sama Balasubramanian, another WSU alumni and lead of the GP Registrars Association, enjoyed talking with George Nohra, the Nick Collins Award winner in 2019!



Drs George Nohra and Sama Balasubramanian

Jenny attended a 35 year **RANZCOG Diplomates event** in November and was thrilled to meet up with a RANZCOG alumnus Dr Gaya Singhe who accepted a six month fellowship in Port Moresby. She was accompanied by her husband - another alumnus, Dr Patrick Pender! Together we posed for a photograph with Dr Juriaan Beek one of our longest standing Northern Rivers GP Supervisors, who was also accepting a 35 year Diplomate award!



Drs Patrick Pender, Juriaan Beek, Gaya Singhe and Jenny

On 1-2 June, Miriam and Winston attended the **Australian Society for Psychological Medicine & RACGP Joint Conference** in Melbourne, which explored the theme of 'Trauma Informed Care in General Practice'. The program covered topics including family and couple therapy in the context of trauma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of trauma recovery, and trauma and substance use. Miriam presented a workshop on the topic of 'Researching and

## WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS

We are very excited to announce that we will be welcoming two WSU alumni to Academic Registrar roles in the Department in 2020.

Dr Shakif Shakur will be using qualitative research approaches to explore the attitudes of African refugee men living in Greater Western Sydney towards various sexual and reproductive health issues. Dr Shakur has already been awarded a Vice Chancellor Leadership Scholarship to attend a short course in medical education at Harvard University in March 2020!

We are also looking forward to Dr Laura Elsom joining us in 2020. Laura will be seeking an understanding of GP and GP registrar views and experiences of treating hepatitis C in order to recommend development of resources to assist in management of this important health issue.

Associate Professor Penny Abbott will be supervising both our GP registrars. We believe that attracting our own graduates to roles like this is a mark of the success of our program!

**Emma Busby** our Research Assistant for the past 18 months is leaving us in 2020 to pursue a career in the police force. Thank you and all the best Emma!

teaching trauma informed care in the general practice setting', whilst Winston co-presented a workshop - 'Self-care interactive workshop for busy GPs - principles from trauma-informed care'.

In July Jenny was honoured to present a paper on Multimorbidity and the role of primary health care at the **132nd Annual International Medical Congress of the Sri Lanka Medical Association**. Thanks to Professor Kumara Mendis who hosted us during our time in this beautiful country.



Maithri and Jenny explore the city



Winston, Maithri and Miriam at the three sisters en route to Bathurst

## MEET DR MAITHRI RUPASINGHE

I am a senior registrar in Family Medicine in Postgraduate Institute of Medicine Sri Lanka and a part-time general practitioner for 16 years in Sri Lanka. Having completed MD in Family Medicine and one year of post MD local training I came to University of Western Sydney for my postgraduate overseas training as a visiting fellow in the department of GP in April 2019.

Objectives of my training are, to learn about health systems especially Australian general practice and GP teaching methods and to engage in GP research.

My overall supervisor is Professor Jennifer Reath and the research supervisor is Associate Professor Penelope Abbott. In addition, I visit Bridgeview Medical Practice in Toongabbie under the supervision of Dr Thava Seelan, one of the principals of the practice.

I assist with GP teaching under the guidance of Dr Lawrence Tan and Dr Miriam Brooks and have shared my knowledge with students on common neonatal presentations in GP, asthma and elderly care in GP. I am leading a qualitative research project titled "Asthma assessment and management: what are the challenges, facilitators and the strategies to assist GPs and Practice nurses." At Bridgeview Medical Practice I observe GP consultations and acute presentations in the Australian setting and learn how GP works with a multidisciplinary team to give good quality care to patients.

Overall, I consider it a great privilege to work with the lovely team in department of GP and I take this opportunity to thank all of them for making my stay in Australia a memorable one.

# GP Supervisor/ Practice Manager News

## YEAR 1 UPDATE

In July, 144 Western Sydney University students pioneered GP placements in their first year of medical school. They attended general practices for one session per month for four months, completing their placements in October. We envisage most of the students will return to the same practices for four sessions in their first semester of Year 2 next year.

Despite the early stage in their medical education, students were in awe of the breadth of skills, intimate knowledge of their patients and families, and continuity of care displayed by their GP supervisors. Some have told us they had never considered general practice as a possible career option until they saw what GPs really did. While on placement, students interviewed a patient with a chronic condition as part of their "Patient Story" assignment to learn about the impact of chronic disease on the patient's life.

Early feedback from supervisors and other academics from the School of Medicine has been very encouraging and they note the benefits of early exposure to general practice enhancing students' on-campus learning about professionalism, communication, social determinants of health, and clinical sciences.

A heartfelt thank you to all our Year 1 student supervisors who bravely took on this new challenge, some of whom had multiple students from different years in their practices on different days of the week. There were a few teething issues, however we are grateful to our placement team Sharon and George for resolving these.

**Please contact Sharon at [GPDept@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:GPDept@westernsydney.edu.au) if you are interested in supervising students from Years 1, 2, 3 or 5 next year.**

## TOONGABBIE CELEBRATIONS

Bridgeview Medical Practice celebrated their 10th anniversary in October. Jenny was delighted to join practice principals Drs Shanthini and Thava Seelan and Dr Lumina Titus at a very joyful celebration of this award winning general practice.



Drs Maithri Rupasinghe, Thava and Shanthini Seelan, Lumina Titus, Jenny Reath and Tim Usherwood

## NEW PIP ARRANGEMENTS

### Medicare Payment Schedule 2020

Cut-off dates for submitting claim forms	Quarterly Payment Month
24 January, 2020	February
24 April, 2020	May

### 2020 Metro Placement Dates (Semester 1)

Year 3 MiC Students: Metro	Year 5 GP Students: Metro
MiC 1: 27 January – 28 February, 2020	Metro 1: 3 February – 6 March, 2020
MiC 2: 2 March – 3 April, 2020	Metro 2: 9 March – 10 April, 2020
MiC 3: 20 April – 22 May, 2020	Metro 3: 13 April – 15 May, 2020

## WORKSHOP

### GP Supervisor, Alumni and Academic Registrar workshop Primary Care: How do we compare?

#### Date

Wednesday, 22nd January, 2020

#### Venue

WSU Blacktown Clinical School  
Blacktown Hospital  
18 Blacktown Road, Blacktown

6.00pm	Finger food	
6.40pm	Welcome and Introductions	<b>Prof Jenny Reath</b>
6.50pm	Primary Healthcare in the Netherlands	<b>Dr Hannah van Werven</b>
7.10pm	A UK perspective	<b>May</b>
7.30pm	Primary Healthcare in Sri Lanka	<b>Dr Maithri Rupasinghe</b>
7.50pm	Panel Discussion	<b>International Colleagues</b>
8.05pm	What is high quality in the Australian context ?	<b>Dr Christine Metusela</b>
8.25pm	How can we teach our students about high quality General Practice?	<b>Panel Discussion including all presenters</b>
8.45pm	Wrap up, questions and evaluation	

Register your attendance by COB Monday, 13th January 2020

**Please fax or email to Sharon Lawrence:**  
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**[GPDept@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:GPDept@westernsydney.edu.au)**



# Student News



Lawrence Tan, Muna Halane, Suvini Suriyarachchi, Megan Foo, Meera Thangarajah, Kohen Lau, George Nohra, Jenny Reath at GP19

## STUDENTS AT GP19

Around 1700 GPs from all over Australia gathered in Adelaide in October for the RACGP annual conference. It was a great time of hearing cutting edge futuristic presentations about where General Practice may be heading, as well as an opportunity to get upskilled and updated in clinical care. It was a great pleasure to see a number of alumni and medical students from Western Sydney University in attendance, including George Nohra, a Year 5 student who is the 2019 recipient of the Nick Collins award.

Fellow Year 5 students Megan Foo, Elizabeth Hargan and Meera Thangarajah presented their community research project "Experiences of GPs toward the revised National Cervical Screening Program", conducted in Bathurst. Kohen Lau, Suvini Suriyarachchi and Muna Halane, also in Year 5, presented their research on "Specialist referrals for culturally- diverse patients" that was conducted in Western Sydney. Many thanks to all the supervisors of student community research projects.

## OUR STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH IN TAIWAN

In July, Winston supervised 10 WSU students (8 medicine, 1 nursing, 1 nutrition and food science) during a 2 week 'Taiwan Inter-Professional Public Health Immersion Experience' at Asia University, Taichung. Our students built friendships with peers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Vietnam and Cambodia as they learnt about the principles of community development and Taiwan's community care programs for vulnerable groups. We also learnt about the cultures of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan and their government's community care initiatives to help address inequalities. We visited 2 rural community care centres where we met senior citizens as they attended a talk on domestic violence, and presented to us their projects to improve their village environment.



Megan Foo and Dr Anna Pham, Principal of Picton Family Medical Centre

Cultural activities included learning the Mandarin language and a traditional group dance; visits to a doctor's memorial house, a traditional paper factory, folk arts museum and temple. Our students reflected on how the Australian approach to community care can be improved, based on approaches used in Taiwan and other countries. This project was funded by the New Colombo Plan.

## STUDENT AWARDS

The **2019 Picton Family Medical Centre & Wollondilly Council Prize for Academic Excellence in General Practice** was **Megan Foo** who undertook her GP training in Bathurst. Megan has been an outstanding student in many respects leading the Western Sydney University Medical Soc in 2018, and in 2019 was President of the NSW Medical Students Council. Dr Kean-Seng Lim (NSW AMA president) reports that Megan has been a highly engaged and energetic member of the Medical Students Association for many years, involved in organising the Pre-Internship conference for final year students as well as Medical Student conferences.

**George Nohra was the 2019 Nick Collins Award** winner and thoroughly enjoyed his experience at GP 19 – providing a moving reflection on the experience below:

I had the honour and privilege of representing the WSU medical school and Dr Nick Collins, at this year's GP19 conference. It was an experience which will remain one of the highlights of medical school, and I would like to sincerely thank the GP faculty and the generous donors of the Nick Collins award, for providing the opportunity. GP19 is the annual conference for the RACGP, and it allowed me to experience all the wonderful aspects of the profession! I attended multiple teaching sessions on a wide range of medical topics; and I had the privilege of meeting current leaders of medicine in Australia, future mentors and colleagues.

On the first afternoon, there was a welcome reception which provided an opportunity to welcome the guests and announce New



George Nohra and Jenny Reath at GP19 Gala dinner

Zealand as the destination for the conference in 2021. It was here that I had the honour of meeting a legend in the field of medicine, and especially general practice in Australia, Professor John Murtagh!

The next day began with a plenary on voluntary assisted dying. I then attended sessions which showcased research conducted by my WSU colleagues, on GP career choices and practice. After this, I attended sessions on chronic kidney disease, point of care testing, gout, and aged care.

That night, I had the privilege of attending the GP19 Gala dinner night as the guest of Professor Jenny Reath. I was able to meet more colleagues and leaders of the profession, and gained an understanding of some of the current work being done for future clinical practice reform, teaching, and advocating for GP registrars. The night was definitely the highlight of the conference!

The following morning included further plenary presentations on expectations of future patients and the ECHO model. The conference concluded with a "Pitchfest", where potential future healthcare projects were pitched to potential investors, and finally, a session on business in general practice.

GP19 was a highlight of my time in medical school, and further cemented my interest and passion for general practice. Professor Reath helped me to network with future colleagues and mentors, and I can honestly say that I came away from the conference, having advanced my personal, professional and academic development!

## GPSN COMMITTEE FOR 2020

We look forward to working with our GPSN leadership committee in 2020!

Chair: Precy Zea

Vice chair: Samia Jamal

Treasurer: Vicki Li

Secretary: Akshaya Thananjeyan

Media and Promotions: Charmie Fong

Blacktown Rep: Jessica Cesca

Macarthur Rep: Aashrinee Gunasekara

# Alumni News

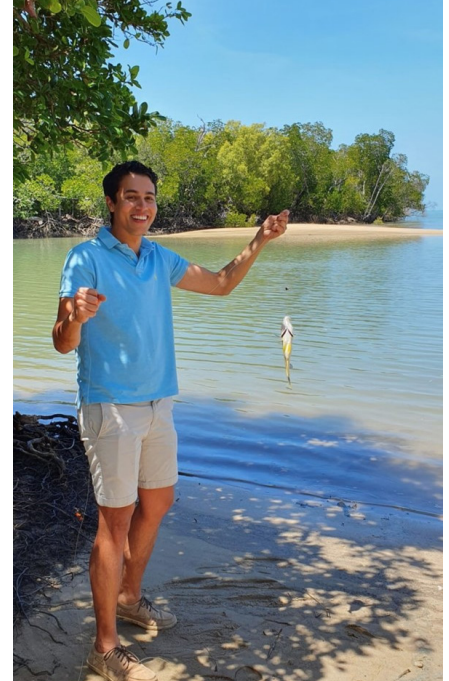
## UPDATE FROM JEROME CROUCHE

I've been up and around various parts of Australia since graduating back in 2012. I completed my Intern/Residency years in Bankstown and Campbelltown with a PGPPP term in Bowral. I had the amazing opportunity to do Rural GP training in Moree and Tamworth (Moree of which I picked having had the opportunity to go there as a student through WSU). It was possibly the best training I could have asked for with such amazing support from all the rural GPs in that area.

After fellowship I moved to Adelaide, for my partner's Paediatric Gastroenterology training, to do part time in the CBD and part time up in the Adelaide Hills for 18 months. Having moved up to Brisbane at the beginning of this year for his training I didn't want to put my rural training to waste so I came across a great position in Coen, Cape York. I essentially fly up to Cairns every Sunday night then on to Coen on Monday morning and work until Wednesday afternoon and then fly on to Cairns and back to Brisbane later that night.

Cape York is certainly a fantastic place to work! You work as a solo Practitioner FIFO with a Nurse Practitioner and Midwife every fortnight. It keeps me on my toes and keeps my clinical reasoning and clinical skills up to date. You train yourself as a bit of pharmacist learning to pack and dispense all the medications and I had the opportunity to teach myself how to use the ultrasound machine. We see everything from the common coughs and colds to Rheumatic Heart disease and coordinating retrievals via RFDS. The community I work in, Coen, has a population of about 300-400. It's a close knit welcoming community and I have loved every day I've spent up in the Cape. It's a place full of history and so much to learn from the people. It is certainly by far the best medicine I have practiced since graduating.

I then work in a private GP clinic in Brisbane on the remaining 2 days. Coming to the end of the year I've had to give up the Cape York post as we are preparing to move to Melbourne for my partner's training.



Dr Jerome Crouch on Cape York



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW ALUMNUS BABY!

In 2019 Dr Deepa Mahananda welcomed Ruben who joins Eva in keeping Deepa busy! In the midst of her parental responsibilities and her clinical practice as a GP at Kellyville, Deepa has also provided us with greatly valued assistance with our PBLA marking. Thank you and congratulations Deepa!

Deepa, Ruben and Eva

# Our Communities

## BANKSTOWN WELLNESS FESTIVAL

The Department of General Practice continues to support community engagement activities in Western Sydney alongside our nursing and allied health colleagues, as part of the STITCHes collaborative (Serving Through Interprofessional Community Health Engagement).

For the last three years we have attended Bankstown Wellness Festival, an event designed to engage members of the community who may not be accessing local

health and wellness services, also to engage people suffering with mental illness. In October 2019 four final year students supervised by Dr Maithri Rupasinghe and Dr Miriam Brooks conducted cardiovascular screening health checks on around 100 community members, and had conversations about local services that can help with mental health difficulties, as well as substances and sexual health. Our student's diverse language skills were a real asset and attracted many non-English speaking community members to our stall.



Left to right: Justine Binny, Muna Mohamud, Sarah Rusnak, Dr Miriam Brooks, Zehra Alsutany

# Research Updates



## WATCH/INFLATE TRIALS

2019 has seen a lot of activity in our NHMRC funded WATCH and INFLATE trials - investigating treatment options for acute otitis media and otitis media with effusion in Aboriginal children living in urban areas. We sadly say farewell to Winnunga Aboriginal Health Service and hello to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, maintaining our total of 6 Aboriginal Health Services participating in our trials across QLD, NSW and VIC.

The WATCH trial is inching towards its target of 480 children at 231 currently enrolled, while INFLATE has made an impressive start at 70/380 enrolled. We are busily conducting a mid-term process evaluation of the trials based on analysis of meeting minutes and interview data from parents and carers, health care providers, research officers and Aboriginal community reference groups. We are also reviewing independent ENT assessment of our tympanometry and otoscopy data.

Several WATCH / INFLATE Aboriginal Research Officers have presented on our trials at national and international ear and Aboriginal health conferences and some of our sites have been successful in securing additional funds to conduct small ear health related sub-studies such as investigation of use of a hand held device to detect hearing loss in 4 year olds. Another Research Officer is undertaking interviews with parents and carers whose children were ineligible for the trials, to ascertain their perspectives on ear disease and its treatment. One of the more recently recruited Research Officers has completed a newspaper article about her experience as a de novo researcher in ear disease.

The WATCH/INFLATE team gathered face to face in Brisbane and Sydney in 2019 – always a productive and rewarding experience!

## GP SUPERVISOR RESEARCH

### QUALITY EQUITY AND SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: QUEST PHC

This project is funded by an Ainsworth grant and conducted in partnership with WentWest, the Western Sydney Primary Health Network.

The overall aim of the research project is to develop a suite of indicators and measures of high quality general practice in the Australian setting. We are currently reviewing our findings with general practice staff at WentWest as well as Southwest Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains PHNs. With additional funding we hope to extend our consultations to other PHNs around Australia. In the future such an agreed set of indicators could inform an evidence based, data extraction tool enabling general practices and PHNs to measure practice quality in order to evaluate their progress on achieving quality indicator targets, forecast likely impact of practice changes on selected outcomes, and evaluate the impact of any subsequent practice changes on these outcomes.

## STUDENT RESEARCH

Saira Gugnani and Ishaan Thakur recently completed their 2018-19 GP Synergy Scholarships. These were systematic literature reviews on speech and hearing difficulties in children 0-5 years, and skin cancer screening. In 2020 we will again have two GP Synergy supported students undertaking research with our Department. Thomas Nguyen will examine year 5 student data (from pre/post surveys) to address the question "How does clinical placement affect student confidence with illness/disease management"? Emma Gregory will review articles targeting Australian GPs to identify "How many times do different health practitioners recommend GPs play a 'key role' in managing various health issues".

Dr Steve Trankle, our Research Fellow will also be supervising two groups of year 4 students in their 2020 MBBS Community Research Projects. One project involves a re-analysis of 125 patient, carer and provider interviews exploring "How does an integrated care approach impact patient self-management of chronic disease"? The other project group is planning an interview study with GPs to better understand how general practitioners in Australia engage in Advance Care Planning with culturally and linguistically diverse patients and families.

## New Publications

1. **Trankle SA, Reath J.** Partners in Recovery: an early phase evaluation of an Australian mental health initiative using program logic and thematic analysis. BMC Health Serv Res. 2019. DOI: [10.1186/s12913-019-4360-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4360-2)
2. Bar-Zeev Y, Bovill M, Bonevski B, Gruppette M, **Reath J.** ICAN QUIT in Pregnancy Pilot Group, Gould G. Improving Smoking Cessation Care in Pregnancy at Aboriginal Medical Services: 'ICAN QUIT in Pregnancy' Step-Wedge Cluster Randomized Study. *BMJ Open*. *BMJ Open* 9.6 (2019): E025293. Web.
3. Shahab Y, Alofiave-Doorbinnia O, **Reath J.** MacMillan F, Simmons D, McBride K, et al. Samoan Migrants' Perspectives on Diabetes: A qualitative study. *Health Promot J Austr*. 2019. DOI: [10.1002/hpja.240](https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.240)
4. **Abbott P.** Access to primary health care for people in contact with the criminal justice system. The Churchill Trust. 2019. <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/4406/Penelope+Abbott>
5. **Reath J,** King, M, Kmet W, O'Halloran D, Brooker R, Aspinall D, Bitar H, Seelan T, Burke M, Usherwood T. Experiences of primary health care professionals and patients from an area of urban disadvantage: A qualitative study. *BJGP Open*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgpopen19X101676>
6. **Trankle SA,** Usherwood T, **Abbott P,** Roberts M, Crampton M, Girgis C, Riskallah J, Chang Y, Saini J, **Reath J.** Integrating health care in Australia: a qualitative evaluation. BMC Health Serv Res. 2019. 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4780-z>



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### DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE ACADEMIC & RESEARCH STAFF

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