

Defining primary health care research

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PHCRED Tri-state Career pathways workshops

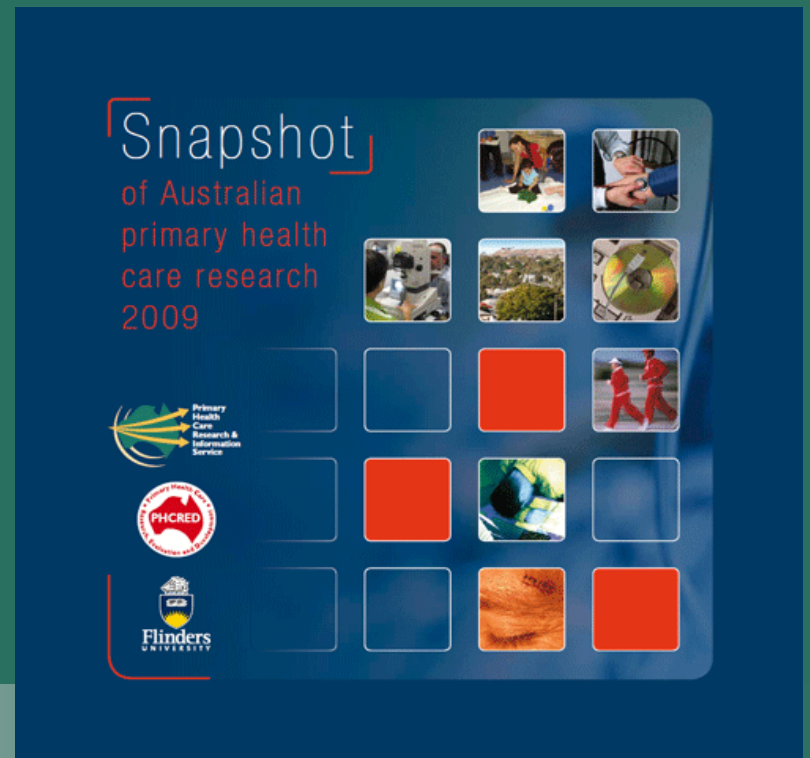
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Primary health care research

1. What is primary health care?
2. What is research?
3. What is primary health care research?
 - purpose?
 - topics?
 - methods?
 - researchers?



- Achieving a balanced life in the face of chronic illness
- What doctors want: A consultation method when the patient is a doctor
- A feasibility study of a communication and education asthma intervention for general practitioners in Australia
- Assessment and management of lifestyle risk factors in rural and urban general practices in Australia
- Divisions' role in diabetes prevention and management in 2006-07: a South Australian case study
- Driving change in rural workforce planning: The Medical Schools Outcomes Database
- The ABC of primary health care collaborations in rural Australia
- Social network analysis for farmers' hearing services in a rural community

From forthcoming issue of Australian Journal of Primary Health



1. What is primary health care?

- Primary Health Care (PHC) incorporates personal care with health promotion, the prevention of illness and community development.
- The philosophy of PHC includes the interconnecting principles of equity, access, empowerment, community self-determination and intersectoral collaboration.
- It encompasses an understanding of the social, economic, cultural and political determinants of health.

Keleher H 2001



Primary health care: a way to achieve important health goals

Primary health care is vital to making our health system focus more on keeping people well and able to participate in life and work, rather than just looking after them when they are sick.

It is an important part of addressing the current inequities in access and outcomes for some groups in our community, including Indigenous Australians and those who live in our rural areas.

It is also key to

- addressing the future challenges of ageing and the growing burden of chronic disease
- managing pressures on our hospitals.

Draft National Primary Health Care Strategy 2009, Foreword by
Nicola Roxon



National Primary Health Care Strategy is road map to future

- To provide Australians with a primary health care system which is among the best in the world and is equipped to meet future challenges.
- Primary health care
 - first point of connection with the health system and
 - needs to be able to manage the full range of challenges that emerge
 - prevention
 - enabling access to health services
 - managing complex chronic conditions in partnership with other health sectors

Draft National Primary Health Care Strategy 2009, Foreword



Key directions for change

- Improving access
- Better managing chronic disease
- More systematic focus on prevention
- Strong framework for quality and safety

Draft National Primary Health Care Strategy 2009, Foreword



2 Research has these features.....

- Questions deliberately asked
- Systematic approach to finding answers
- Results analysed in transparent reproducible manner
- Conclusions judged on quality and meaning of results compared to other studies
- Results applied appropriately
- Results disseminated to those who might effect change

Askew et al 2005



Many types of research

- Basic and applied
- Development and evaluation
- Strategic
- Investigator driven and Priority driven
- Clinical
- Health policy and systems
- Health services
- Public health



3. Primary health care research

- Is based on the organisation and delivery of primary health care
 - first contact, usually ongoing, health and medical care in the General Practice setting and in Aboriginal Medical Services
 - broader health and medical care in the community to individuals and their families by community nurses, allied health practitioners and community pharmacists.



The PHCRED program in 2006 did not extend to....

- Research based on care or programs delivered outside of the above settings, such as care and programs delivered in hospitals, in schools and in non-clinical fields such as community development.

Source: Assessment panel terms of reference and panel guide, November 2006



Why is PHC research needed?

Continual accrual of evidence-based knowledge is the basis for progress in every field of endeavour.

Primary care is no exception.

(Starfield, 1998)



PHC research is needed to

- lead to better informed policy and practice
- improve patient care by filling evidence gaps
 - Basic clinical or social science
 - Effectiveness (clinical, cost)
 - Applicability to primary health care
 - Implementation (know-do)
- stimulate intellectual rigour and critical thinking among practitioners

(D.Askew, et al 2005)



Features of PHC research in Australia

- Small developing field of research
- Mainly Government funding
- Overlaps with other research fields eg population health, public health, health promotion, health services
- Research leaders often have competing priorities
 - conduct clinical practice, teach, and administer departments
- Collaboration essential
 - between research centres
 - with international centres
 - between research disciplines
 - with practice and policy



3. PHC research is DIVERSe

- Research disciplines
- Types of research
- Research methods
- Topics
- Populations
- Settings



PHC researchers come from diverse backgrounds

- Clinicians from medical, allied health, nursing, pharmacy and other disciplines
- Social scientists – anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, geographers
- Physical and natural sciences - physiologists, biologists, geneticists
- Managers, policy advisors, teachers
- Consumers, citizens, patients



Background of authors at 2009 GP & PHC Research Conference

| Main background | Number (%) | Number with additional qualifications (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|---|
| Medicine | 188 (32%) | 120 (64%) |
| Nursing and allied health | 112 (19%) | 60 (54%) |
| Social science | 168 (29%) | 139 (83%) |
| Science | 89 (15%) | 66 (74%) |
| Other | 82 (14%) | N/A |
| Unknown | 19 (3%) | N/A |
| Total | 583 | 385 |



Basic research in primary care

Measure

- health status
- case mix and severity of illness
- quality of care
- need for referral
- effectiveness of care
- patients' experience of care and responsiveness to care

Develop, adapt and test ways to

- manage presenting problems
- examine effectiveness of training and education
- improve accuracy and efficiency of data collection and record keeping

(Adapted from Starfield 1998)



Types of research

Applied (Policy-related) research in Primary Care (Adapted from Starfield 1998)

1. Clinical research
2. Health services research
3. Research related to primary care training



Applied research in primary care

1 Clinical research

- Descriptions of primary care practice in different settings to understand reasons for variation
- Evaluating effectiveness of treatment, protocols, prevention, patient education and self management activities
- Process of clinical decision-making
- Differences between users and non-users of services

(Adapted from Starfield 1998)



Applied research in primary care

2 Health services research in primary care

- Roles of health workers
- Teamwork
- Organising and financing
- Referral practices
- Continuity of care
- Coordination
- Comprehensiveness
- First contact care

(Adapted from Starfield 1998)



Applied research in primary care

Definition: Health Services Research (HSR)

- Multi-disciplinary research activity with implicit objective of improving the health services patients receive.
- Dimensions of improvement:
 - effective, timely, appropriate, accessible, safe, efficient
- HSR uses theories of human behaviour from contributing disciplines, along with evidence from the medical sciences, to generate and test hypotheses about the delivery of health care.



Way forward for research:-

Continued development of

- high quality and relevant primary health care research expertise and evidence base
- knowledge exchange between researchers, practitioners and policy makers, and
- culture of continuous quality improvement across primary health care.

(2009) Report supporting the
National Primary Health Care Strategy



You and your research

- Be part of the PHC research community through PHC RIS
- Include yourself and your research in ROAR on PHC RIS website
- Think about impact before you start
- Involve potential users
- Monitor and document what happens with potential users Publish and disseminate (and document)
- Acknowledge the PHCRED strategy, other funding sources



References

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<http://www.phcris.org.au/>

Visit PHC RIS website

<http://www.phcris.org.au/conference/2010/>

2010 Primary Health Care Research Conference

<http://www.phcris.org.au/activities/index.php>

Primary Health Care Research Contribution Project 2009: The contribution of primary health care research to the 2008-09 health reform process in Australia

Primary Health Care Research Impact Project

Snapshot of Australian primary health care research 2008

Snapshot of Australian primary health care research 2009

<http://www.phcris.org.au/roar/index.php>

ROAR: Roadmap of Australian Primary Health Care Research

