

# Making research work for Better Health....

## PHC RED Network Forum

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How can the research potential of general practice be better captured and integrated into the primary care research agenda?

And how do we improve  
the chances of getting  
evidence into practice?

“research can easily become uncoupled from clinical practice”

“there is little evidence that the untapped resource that is general practice, with its aggregate of unanswered questions and untested impressions, has been accessed in developing R and D agendas”

Let's not forget the  
development bit of that!

“researchers increasingly ask & answer research questions that are irrelevant or unimportant to practising clinicians...”

“research can easily be driven by individual and institutional agendas operating in virtual isolation”

and so so and so on....

“There is as yet, no strong culture of research in primary care and much of the existing research is conceived and undertaken by people outside primary care. The poor implementation of research findings may, in part, be owing to the fact that those delivering the service are not involved in asking or answering the questions that are relevant to their practice....”

Whitford et al, British Journal of General Practice, 2000



**"87% of the 56% who completed more than 23% of the survey thought it was a complete waste of time."**

## General Practice Network South Research Policy

- Research should be developed in partnership with general practice
- General Practice is not a goldfield of data to mined
- Incentives to participate must be built into the research funding (not just dollars)
- The research concepts must be meaningful to general practice

etc

“Research becomes relevant in primary care when the findings apply to problems in daily practice that are important, frequent, or stress provoking to members of the primary care team or to patients”.

*“.... and I are currently researching multimorbidity with a view to publishing. Multi-morbidity is a growing area of international concern - health costs etc - and can really only be dealt with by GP's and to some extent, hospitals. I believe we need to be letting Canberra know how central we are to minimising the upcoming blowout in health demand, and GP-based research can provide our politically oriented colleagues, including yourself, some ammunition. We need access to a supplement in the European Journal of General Practice but don't want to subscribe at 500 plus Euros. Do you know of any way of accessing this journal?”*

There must also be a  
likelihood of being able to  
implement the findings of the  
research

We need to make it more meaningful and relevant to engage the hearts and minds of general practice.

- The research questions prioritised by Whitehead's teams tended toward patient behaviour and service organisation rather than clinical issues/problems
- This contrasted with the national priority setting work of the NHS at the time which focussed on illnesses
- The principal issue for clinicians is often how to best implement research findings in the context of the primary care consult

In 2007/2008 only 3% of the NHMRC funding was devoted to health services research.

Research questions  
commissioned against an agenda  
set outside primary care (and  
clinical practice) may produce  
important results but the findings  
are less likely to be implemented.



# Future state?

- Bring academic rigour and research capacity away from bureaucracies & closer to clinicians and their practice
- Improve marketing & communication systems and close the loop more effectively
- Avoid percolation and aim for **espresso** when disseminating results

- Aim to enhance the organisation of care delivery through a systematic R and D program that informs funders, policy makers and research users-born out of clinical practice
- Collaborations between clinicians, researchers and policy makers should become routine.

“The more important the subject and the closer it cuts to the bone of our hopes and needs, the more we are likely to err in establishing a framework for analysis”.

Stephen J Gould