From the Professor’s Desk

It is March 2014 and it looks like Xmas is not that far away. 😊

The GP Unit is in for exciting times, especially with more formal joint Medicare Local and Local Health District activities to improve primary and integrated care in our health neighbourhood in Fairfield LGA and SW Sydney.

Staff news:

We welcome our new clinical GP Registrars (Drs Catherine Lip and Sam Cheng) for the next 6 months.

We farewell:

Dr Dayna Griffin who will be continuing her vocational training at Liverpool, completing her OBGYN training. Dayna will also be having a baby soon!

Dr Nala Sugitharan, who has completed her Academic GP Registrar term. She has completed her research project on mental health of Tamil patients and refugees and is finalising a paper for submission to a journal.

Dr Sanjyot Vagholkar who, after 10 productive years with the GP Unit, has decided to take time off to complete her PhD and to contemplate her future career directions.

Our academic Registrar, Thi, also had a baby boy during this period.

General practice and primary care activities in our neighbourhood:

The Primary Health Network Committee (Fairfield) is chaired by Dr Harry Pope and aims to provide advice and guidance to the SWSML regarding the primary care needs of the Fairfield community. It has a focus on improving the needs and gaps analysis of primary care services conducted by the SWSML recently. Other members of the committee include GPs (Francis Halder, Lawrence Tan, Jonathan Lee, Teng Liaw), physiotherapist (Tom Wong), and SWSML staff (Lyn Long, Amy Humphries, Matthew Palmer and Alison Tran). Please contact the committee members directly or through Alison Tran (1300 179 765) if you wish to contribute or seek advice on related matters.

The joint SWSML and SWLHD Integrated Health Committee comprises the Executives of both LHD and ML, Directors of the LHD Complex Care, Emergency and Aged Care Clinical Stream Leaders, Director of Population Health and Director of GP Unit. It is charged with developing and overseeing projects to improve the delivery of integrated health services through better coordination of care across primary and secondary care in SW Sydney as identified in the strategic plans of both ML and LHD. Current projects sponsored by this committee include: Integrated diabetes care, 2-way communication between community and hospital based clinicians using IT, and developing and implementing an integrated primary care centre in Oran Park. Others are being developed. If you have strong views on what the needs are in your health neighbourhood, please speak to me.

The NSW Health General Practice-Hospital Clinical Handover program has been launched to be implemented through NSW LHDs, MLs and other community organisations. This is an opportunity to link with our colleagues in hospitals in a standardised and uniform way. Please contact me for more details. You can get a copy of the guiding document at the following URL: http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/publications/
Quality improvement and clinical research in our neighbourhood:

The electronic Practice Based Research Network (ePBRN) program: This continuing and growing program is getting more interesting with applications to answer practice-based quality improvement questions and generate research questions at a health neighbourhood level. Other organisations are beginning to seek our assistance and participation in their research including: the Kirby Institute on research about “Treatment as Prevention” in patients with HIV, and developing and contributing to larger cohort studies of hypertension and cancer for example. The obvious example of the ePBRN work leading health services research is our being selected by the Health Contribution Fund (HCF) to conduct predictive modelling work on the pathways of diabetes patients to admission and re-admission to Fairfield Hospital now has current data from participating 10 general practices in Fairfield and Fairfield Health Services (Admissions and Diabetes Clinic), which we are linking prior to analysis. This is all very exciting and the pioneers in the Fairfield Health Neighbourhood ePBRN are to be congratulated on their forward thinking.

By the way, participation in the ePBRN program is an opportunity to improve your practice records as well as earn you the complete 40 points for the RACGP QI&CPD program (2014-7). Contact Jane Taggart/Charmaine Rodricks (02 96168520) if you are interested.

The Cancer Institute of NSW funded project on “joined-up cancer services” in SW Sydney has been very successful and will be part of the GP-LHD communication project sponsored by the joint ML-LHD Integrated Health Committee. More from Andrew Knight in his column.

Education and training:

Inter-professional learning & teaching: The inter-professional undergraduate student team placement program in various units in Fairfield Hospital has been successfully completed. An inter-professional learning and teaching special interest group has been established to continue this work, chaired by Barbara Chapman, DON of Fairfield Hospital, with partners from SWSLHD nursing education and UNSW SWS Clinical School and simulation laboratory. An online resource has been developed to support clinical supervisors of health professional students. More on this once we have finalised the website.

Friday lunchtime seminars: We will be starting the 2014 series of seminars soon. You are more than welcome to join us at these seminars on research and quality improvement that is relevant to our clinical work. In addition to sharing a sandwich or two and sharing experiences around the latest in clinical topics of interest, you will get meet our new members – and catch up with us older ones – as well as relevant clinicians from your local hospital.

Meet our Registrars

Catherine Lip and Samuel Cheng both graduated from the UNSW Australia.

Catherine did a brief stint at Fairfield Hospital during her first few years as a medical student. She has spent most of her postgraduate training at Manly, Mona Vale and Hornsby Hospitals where she has particularly enjoyed her terms in paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology. She is enjoying the diversity and continuity of care that comes with general practice. In her spare time, she enjoys playing tennis, baking and enjoying a steaming hot cup of Earl Grey tea.

Samuel and has always enjoyed practising a wide variety of medicine. He has trained primarily in Emergency and General Medicine departments in the hospital, and looks forward to building upon that training now in general practice. He enjoys playing most sports, with a particular passion for tennis and soccer.
Electronic Practice Based research Network (ePBRN)

How are your numbers? Do you provide good quality care? How can you measure what you do?

The Fairfield ePBRN is a network of 10 general practices, the hospital and the diabetes clinic that is aiming to improve the quality of clinical records, integrated care and health outcomes.

Practices receive feedback reports comparing their practice with all ePBRN practices on the quality of recording and meeting the RACGP Standards for the content of patient records. Also, in the report is aggregated information about their patient population, diabetes register and rates of patients at risk of CVD and diabetes.

The data is also being used for research purposes including identifying predictors of hospital re-admissions for diabetes patients.

ePBRN practices know where they are and what to improve. Do you? ePBRN practices are contributing to primary care research. Are you?

GP Unit wins NHMRC Grant to improve effectiveness of an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Respect Program in general practice!

Bridging the gap between Thinking and Doing: A whole-of practice approach

Aboriginal people comprise 2.5% of Australia’s population, with 60% urban dwellers with poor access to health care. Poor access to care is reflected through disparities in health status and health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Despite various strategies to close this gap inequities still persist. The project aims at addressing this issue at general practice level.

The “Ways of Thinking and Ways of Doing (WoTWoD)” is the basis of this project which was developed by us during 2008-13 and field-tested through two pilot projects in Melbourne and Sydney. The WoTWoD is a whole-of-practice clinical redesign program and toolkit. Our hypothesis is that WoTWoD, if successfully implemented at general practices, will enable them to provide culturally and clinically appropriate health care to their Aboriginal patients.

This new project is a multi-centre randomized control funded by NHMRC. It will be conducted across two major cities— Sydney and Melbourne. In Sydney the researchers are from UNSW Centre from Primary Health Care & Equity and Melbourne researchers are from the Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne.

We will work closely with Medicare Locals (MLs), Aboriginal Community Controlled Organizations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal communities in our study areas. Five MLs in NSW and four in Melbourne have already agreed to be our partners in this project. We will be working with the “Closing the Gap” team. We will form a local “Care Partnership” at each Medicare Local area which will include representatives from local ACCOs, Medicare Locals and Elders from local Aboriginal communities. The target population will be general practices and we aim recruit 80 practices across both states.

Workshops will be organized to train intervention practice staff on the WoTWoD. Intervention practices will receive support from trained Aboriginal cultural mentors.

Project data collection will include a pre and post audit conducted by practice staff with the assistance from the research team. Practice staff will also be requested to fill a “Cultural Quotient (CQ)” form. Patients and general practice staff will also be interviewed at the end of the study to express views about WoTWoD. Our primary outcomes measures includes cultural respect among practice staff (CQ score) and use of Aboriginal Health Assessment MBS item (Item #715).

Practices will be reimbursed for staff time for project related activities and GPs will be eligible for 40 Cat-1 for audits.

For more information contact:

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Project Coordinator (Sydney) on (02) 9616 8520 or Email: i.hasan@unsw.edu.au

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Project Coordinator (Melbourne) on (03) 8344 9042 or Email: p.lau@unimelb.edu.au
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CANCER SERVICES AND GPs OF PATIENTS WITH CANCER

The General Practice Unit is leading a joint effort with Cancer Services, the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research and South West Sydney Medicare Local to improve the timeliness of clinical correspondence to GPs referring patients to the Cancer Therapy Centre Liverpool. The lateness of clinical correspondence has been identified in previous research as a major barrier to the seamless integration of cancer care provided by GPs and Cancer Services.

This quality improvement project, funded by the Cancer Institute of NSW, will aim to deliver 80% clinical correspondence generated by Cancer Services to General practitioners within 7 days. Several strategies, some of which were recommended by GPs participating in our previous research, including secure messaging options and electronic letter transcription are being explored to achieve this goal. It is anticipated that this will result in General Practitioners having the necessary clinical information at hand during consultations to enable them participate more effectively in the care of their patients with cancer.

On a lighter note, Dr Ron Campbell (The Oaks Medical Centre) emerged lucky winner of our iPad draw from the first cancer project conducted in 2012/2013. We were delighted to present him with his prize in February 2014. We look forward to more fruitful collaborations with General Practitioners in the South West Sydney area.

Other Research Projects of interest at the G P Unit:

Ashcroft Project:
Ashcroft High School in Liverpool serves a very disadvantaged local population. Teaching staff have observed that many children coming into the school have health problems, such as poor hearing, that interfere with their ability to learn. Those students who are in the lowest quartile of educational achievement based on the NAPLAN scores may have more unidentified or poorly managed health problems that are preventing them from learning effectively. This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a school program to identify and manage health problems in these students, in addition to providing an intensive educational support program.

eHealth and Superclinics:
This is an APHCR funded study to evaluate the eHealth maturity of Superclinics and whether it has improved integration. We plan to start this soon with colleagues in Melbourne and Adelaide.

For further information on this newsletter or to contact the GP Unit please see details below:
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