DISCIPLINE OF GENERAL PRACTICE

Opportunities for research and post-graduate studies in General Practice and Primary Care
The UQ Discipline of General Practice offers a multitude of opportunities for students and clinicians interested in research, post graduate studies and research higher degrees in General Practice and Primary Care:

- **Higher Research Degrees (PhD or MPhil)** in the field of general practice or primary care for those wishing to become independent general practice &/or primary care researchers
- **Novice Researcher Fellowships** for the busy clinician interested in learning research skills while doing some clinically relevant research
- **Master of Medicine (General Practice)** course work for GPs wanting to expand their clinical practice and skills
- **Academic Registrar Posts** for GP registrars to develop skills and gain experience in teaching and research
- **Summer Scholarships** for MBBS students to do a small primary care focused research project over the summer break
- **MPH dissertations and MBBS Honours projects** in the field of primary care
Higher Research Degrees (PhD or MPhil)

These qualifications require students to undertake an original and significant research project. They aim to provide research training that fosters the development of independent research skills in candidates. These skills include the ability to:

- Identify an area of significant importance to conduct research
- Formulate appropriate research question(s)
- Master appropriate conceptual and methodological skills
- Critically analyse existing and new research findings
- Relate the research topic to a broader framework of knowledge in general practice and primary care.

Current PhD students in the DGP:

Dr Margaret Kay. Understanding the health access behaviours of doctors seeking medical care for themselves. Supervised by A/Prof Geoff Mitchell.

Ms Sharon Sanders. Clinical prediction rules. Supervised by Prof Jenny Doust and Prof Paul Glasziou (Bond University).

Mr Pasitpon Vatcharavongvan. Relationship between community empowerment and health project outcomes in a Thai community in Brisbane, Australia. Supervised by Dr Julie Hepworth, Dr Deborah Askew, Prof Claire Jackson, Prof John Marley.

Dr Caroline Nicholson. Optimal governance model(s) to support integrated health care in Australia. Supervised by Prof John Marley, Prof Claire Jackson, Prof Geoffrey Kiel.

Dr Geoffrey Spurling. Using routinely collected data for an electronic longitudinal evaluation of health patterns at the Inala Indigenous Health Service. Supervised by Dr Deborah Askew, Prof Wendy Hoy, Hon Prof Philip Schluter.
Centres of Research Excellence

The Discipline of General Practice has recently attracted funding from the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) for two Centres of Research Excellence (CRE). The combined skills and expertise of our team of researchers, our existing research activities, our national and international links and partner organisations, and our research settings and infrastructure, will all provide the CREs with an excellent capacity to provide research training at different levels.

- The APHCRI Centre of Excellence for building quality, governance, performance and sustainability in primary health care through the clinical microsystems approach was established in early 2011 and will receive funding of $2.5 million by APHCRI for four years. The CRE, incorporating the clinical microsystem approach, will investigate improved models in regional governance and e-health, effective multidisciplinary teamwork, and primary care performance and accountability. The centre is multi-institutional, with nodes at University of Queensland, Flinders University, and the University of New South Wales. The team includes national and international research leaders in primary health care, four postdoctoral fellows and three full-time PhD students, and many key partner organisations such as the Mater Medical Research Institute, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited, Improvement Foundation Australia, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Australian Practice Nurses Association, Chronic Illness Alliance, and Australian Association of Practice Managers. For further information about this Centre of Research Excellence, please visit the CRE website www.aphcricremicrosystems.org.au or contact the CRE Senior Program Manager, Dr Tina Janamian t.janamian1@uq.edu.au.

- The Centre for Research Excellence in Improving Quality and Safety at the Interface between Primary and Secondary Level Care was established in late 2010 and will receive funding of $2.5 million for 5 years by NHMRC. The intended aims of this CRE are twofold. Firstly, to improve the quality and safety of health care at the interface between specialists and community-based primary care for patients with chronic and complex health care needs. Secondly, the CRE will examine the impact on health outcomes, patient and clinician satisfaction, and economic outcomes of the improved interface between these sectors. To achieve these aims the CRE will investigate the effectiveness of a model of general practice (Primary Care Amplification) and will focus on three national clinical priority areas - the care of patients with complex Type 2 diabetes, congestive heart failure and palliative care - at Inala Primary Care and at clinics to be operated by UQ Healthcare at Ipswich and Annerley, all in South East Queensland. For further information about this Centre of Research Excellence please contact the CRE Manager Dr Susan O’Brien s.obrien11@uq.edu.au.
PHC-RED Fellowship Program

The DGP has been actively involved in building research capacity in general practice and primary health care, as the University component of the Australian Government’s Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC-RED) Strategy. The PHC-RED Fellowship Program has supported 37 Fellows since 2002, enabling them to learn about developing research questions, literature searching, study designs, writing a research protocol, conducting a systematic review, qualitative and quantitative analysis of data, and writing research papers. 2011 will be the last year that this particular program will be run.

For more information on the University of Queensland’s PHCRED program visit www.uq.edu.au/phcred

2011 PHC-RED Research Fellows

Dr Clare Maher: What is the health status of ATSI women at the beginning of their pregnancy and the timing of their presentation for their first antenatal visit?

Dr Margaret Henderson: Do practices which host multiple learners have distinctive features that may be associated with teaching efficiency and the facilitation of multi-learner/multi-level learning compared with practices that host single learners?

Ms Jenny Morcom: What are the factors that contribute to or limit the effectiveness of the SCC clinics?

Ms Leigh-Anne Pokino: Why do Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander young people (17 -22 year olds) who have been regular users of inhalants stop sniffing?

Some publications from past PHC-RED Research Fellows.


“Being a PHC-RED Fellow enabled me to pursue my academic interest in doctors’ health. With the resources of the University behind me and encouragement for other primary care researchers, this Fellowship was the beginning of an exciting journey that has enriched my general practice enormously. It has been a privilege to be a part of the creative moments in research, experience the joy of publication and share with my peers in conferences and workshops. Now, with many friendships forged across the globe, I am looking forward to completing my PhD and embracing the opportunities ahead.” Dr Margaret Kay, GP Brisbane.
Master of Medicine (General Practice)

The Master of Medicine (General Practice) by course work is for GPs wanting to expand their clinical practice and skills.

From 2009, 70% of the Master of Medicine (General Practice) credits are available via the Faculty of Health Science’s “Health In-situ” – a flexible, web-based e-learning environment which allows GPs to undertake ½ units of study (6 hours) in discrete blocks, without the time and financial commitment of a full Master’s subject.

Available modules include:

- dermatology
- primary eye care
- chronic disease management
- advanced diabetes care
- care of ageing Australians
- GP mental health and counselling.

A practical, skills-based workshop is also available in each module. Modules are priced between $250 and $400. Join GPs from all over Australia and internationally in acquiring advanced skills in important clinical areas.

What some GPs have said about their involvement in the MMed (GP)

“In 2007, I completed the ophthalmology module (GENP7006), and greatly enhanced my skills, knowledge and confidence across the spectrum of GP eye presentations - from children with squints to the elderly with glaucoma and cataracts. The combination of my new skills and my practice’s retinal camera resulted in a 80% drop in our referral rate to the local ophthalmology outpatients clinic - satisfying for me as a clinician and great for my patients. The course is on-line, so I could do it in small chunks which was the only feasible option for a busy clinician with significant family commitments. It was well organised and I would recommend it without hesitation.”  Dr Geoff Spurling (Ophthalmology GENP7006)

“I honestly enjoyed it. This flexible program with strong practice based focus is assisting me to become more competent and confident in an isolated situation like a solo practice in Mt Morgan.”  Dr Talat Hameed Choudhry. (Chronic Disease Management GENP7002, Dermatology GENP7004, and Ophthalmology GENP7006)
Academic Registrar Posts

The Discipline of General Practice offers full and part time positions in academic general practice. These positions provide a year of advanced training in academic general practice to interested general practice registrars.

Academic Posts are part of Australian General Practice Training and provide training in an academic setting and the structure to contribute to research, teaching, professional service and leadership. Registrars can develop skills in research, teaching and student assessment, planning and evaluation or teaching and academic project work. A senior academic supervisor provides guidance, mentorship, supervision, and feedback. The Discipline of General Practice is highly supportive of academic registrars and provides a nurturing environment where academic skills can be developed. Training posts can be structured to meet the specific needs of individual registrars.
Some previous registrars and what they did

**Dr Geoff Spurling** – Geoff was an academic registrar in 2004. During this time, he was involved in lecturing and student assessment, had his own Problem Based Learning (PBL) tutorial group, and undertook a systematic review on delayed antibiotics for upper respiratory tract infections...


**Dr Annie Fonda** – Annie is our current Academic Registrar who is also completing a special skills post in Chronic Disease...

“I am doing my academic post in the Discipline of General Practice as a 12 month part-time post, with part-time clinical work. A typical day may include researching articles around my project topic, teaching a PBL group, writing a database, participating in department meetings and studying a biostatistics subject! There is great satisfaction in not only seeing research questions emerge from clinical practice, but starting to develop the skills to answer them. For the novice researcher, the academic staff offer endless support, and there is a range of expertise in the department to call on for guidance. The academic post offers a wonderful and enriching blend of academic and clinical life, and I highly recommend it for anyone who wants another sort of intellectual challenge.” Dr Annie Fonda

**Dr Rebecca Farley** – Rebecca was an Academic Registrar in 2009/2010 and her research investigated the perspectives of health care providers in providing quality care for refugees.

“My year as an academic registrar with The University of Queensland’s Discipline of General Practice was a highly rewarding experience. I completed my term part-time over twelve months and complemented this with clinical work. In that time I developed knowledge and experience in the areas of teaching and research, which enriched both my academic and clinical work.

During my term I was actively involved in teaching through facilitating small group tutorials, developing and delivering lecture material in the areas of women’s health and refugee health and involvement in the development and delivery of assessment pieces including written papers and clinical exams. The research component of the terms gives registrars the opportunity to develop skills in research through exploring an area of interest and the possibilities are endless. I have conducted a qualitative research project exploring the barriers and facilitators to effective primary health care for refugee patients.

Academic posts provide general practice registrars with an exceptional opportunity to gain experience and skills in research and teaching in a highly supportive environment. One of the greatest strengths of my post was the diversity of experience I was exposed to and the number of people willing to encourage and support me to develop my knowledge and skills as different opportunities arose. For those registrars with an interest in either future research or medical education these posts are an invaluable opportunity.” Dr Rebecca Farley.

**Dr Warren Jennings** – Warren is our current Academic Registrar (2010/2011). His research is a quality improvement exercise within an Aboriginal Medical Service that is aiming to improve the number of patients with Type 2 Diabetes who complete the annual cycle of care.
Summer Scholarships

Summer Scholarships are offered to 2nd year MBBS students to undertake a small piece of primary care related research during the summer vacation. They are designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of the relevance of research to general practice and primary health care.

The Summer Scholarships are a great opportunity for students to write up their Case Based Literature Review for publication, as Maie Walsh, a summer scholar in 2007/2008 did over the summer break. Her research topic arose when she queried her GP supervisor’s routine prescribing of aspirin as primary prevention for patients with type 2 diabetes. It was discussed at the practice’s evidence-based medicine journal club and was the topic of her case-based literature review. She, and her academic supervisor, wrote it up for publication and it was accepted by the British Medical Journal.

Other topics that students have investigated include:

- The detection of atrial fibrillation through pulse palpation
- Monitoring of diabetes through measurement of tear glucose
- Reduction of morbidity/mortality of ischaemic heart disease through treatment of co-morbid depression
- The use of atypical antipsychotics for treatment of anxiety and insomnia in general practice: a risk versus benefit analysis of the literature.

Some outcomes of past Summer Scholarships


MPH dissertations and MBBS Honours projects

The research activities of the Discipline of General Practice span a wide variety of areas including:

- Health care integration and reform
- Health service delivery and health care integration and reform
- Palliative care research
- Medical education research
- Innovative primary health care models (for chronic disease management)
- Clinical microsystem methodology
- Refugee Health
- Indigenous health
- E-health
- Doctor’s health
- Health of disadvantaged groups
- General Practice and Cancer management
- Effective multidisciplinary teamwork
- Mental health
- Health workforce
- Sustainable development of general practice and primary care

These broad areas of research provide a multitude of potential research topics for MPH dissertations and MBBS Honours projects. For example

Indigenous Child Health Checks - This recently initiated research project aims to evaluate the role of indigenous child health checks, evaluate the health status of indigenous children and identify predictors of ill-health and resilience.

Chronic Disease Management in General Practice – the ageing population, increased levels of overweight and obesity, and decreased levels of physical activity are all contributing to the increased prevalence of chronic disease. General Practice is the arena where the majority of chronic disease prevention and management occurs. How can general practice provide the best possible care for their patients to minimise the development and progression of chronic disease?

Chemoprevention of complicated sun damaged skin – a systematic review of the evidence - “Chemoprevention” is the prevention of photoaging and skin cancer through the use of pharmacologic agents that inhibit or reverse the process of photoaging or carcinogenesis. What is the evidence supporting routine use of chemopreventive agents?

A controlled trial of Saline nasal spray versus antibiotics for post-viral rhinosinusitis and cough – Saline nasal spray may decrease the intensity and duration of symptoms of the common cold. This will be a general practice based randomised controlled trial that has the potential to decrease antibiotic over-usage for the ‘chesty’ cough following upper respiratory tract infection.

Retinopathy screening in patients with type 2 diabetes in General Practice – suitably trained and equipped GPs are conducting retinopathy screening programs for their patients with type 2 diabetes. What is the prevalence of diabetic retinopathy in a general practice population? What other co-morbidities are present?
About the Discipline of General Practice

The Discipline of General Practice is one of Australia’s busiest academic general practice departments:

- teaching > 400 medical students annually,
- co-ordinating a state wide clinical teacher team of 100s of GPs
- providing a hugely heterogeneous research program with national and international research linkages
- offering an on-line Master of Medicine (General Practice) program
- supervising numerous Masters, PhD students
- focus on support, relevant research and good teamwork

Join the team and make YOUR contribution to improving our health care system internationally!

Clinical activities
The academic general practitioner staff of the DGP are actively involved in clinical practice – either in private general practice in Brisbane, or at the University of Queensland’s academic general practice – Inala Primary Care – which is embedded within a community health centre at Inala.

Teaching Activities
The DGP contributes strong clinical and general practice input into the University’s four-year Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS) Program, and is responsible for the coordination and delivery of the 8-week General Practice & Community (GP&C) Core Clinical Rotation for 3rd year medical students. The DGP also offers the on-line Master of Medicine (General Practice) program.

Research Activities
The DGP has a developing research culture and infrastructure to support research of relevance to general practice and primary care. Our major research activities are funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council, Queensland Health, Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute and other competitive research grants.
The School of Medicine

UQ's School of Medicine is one of the largest in Australia, and is one of only four “world class” institutions in the nation. The School supports a diversity of research that reflects both the clinical and research specialisation of its staff. With more than 60 active research groups ranging from cancer to diabetes, and schizophrenia to drug metabolism, the School supports world-class researchers at the forefront of medical research.

The School of Medicine’s remit includes the development of the medical workforce of the future, and performance of world-class medical research and health service provision. The School is a diverse enterprise operating over multiple sites, with Queensland Health and private health service providers as major partners. The School includes 10 academic Disciplines spanning the Brisbane metropolitan area, South-West and Central Queensland to organise its teaching and research activities along with a wide range of partners and affiliates in the health and education sector.

The School has its base at the Herston Campus of The University of Queensland, adjacent to the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital, the Royal Children’s Hospital, and the Queensland Institute for Medical Research. It has strong links to other public and private hospitals and with District Health Services.

Faculty Overview

The Faculty of Health Sciences is a major force in health education and research. It offers a diverse range of health study and research opportunities. Traditional medical disciplines sit alongside specialised research and education centres in new and important fields such as online health, clinical research and aged health.

UQ is a research-intensive university and research programs are well developed in each of the Faculty’s seven schools: medicine, dentistry, health and rehabilitative sciences, human movement studies, nursing and midwifery, pharmacy, and population health. Purpose-specific research centres have also been established in key and emerging fields such as clinical research, ageing, environmental toxicology, international and tropical health, military and veteran’s health, Indigenous health, and online health.
Introducing The University of Queensland

The University of Queensland (UQ) is one of Australia’s premier learning and research institutions. It is the oldest university in Queensland and has produced generations of graduates who have gone on to become leaders in all areas of society and industry. It has been named Australia’s University of the Year and continues to enjoy the highest overall rating for Queensland universities in the annual Good Universities Guide.

UQ remains the most successful Australian university in winning and being shortlisted for Australian Awards for University Teaching since they were established in 1997. It is one of the top three or four research universities in the country and this success was underlined last year when it celebrated its 5000th PhD graduation. UQ also is building a cluster of international-quality research centres and institutes to continue pioneering research that has brought the world ground-breaking developments, ranging from the historic vaccine for cervical cancer to the scramjet engine.

The University has more than 5,500 staff, 37,000 students from over 120 countries, annual revenues of over $1 billion (including research income of nearly $200 million) and assets of almost $2 billion.

Our Mission and Vision

The mission of The University of Queensland is to create a community dedicated to achieving national and international levels of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, one that makes significant contributions to the intellectual, cultural, social and economic life of Queensland, Australian and international communities.