



Seminar 1—Practice-based research network development in Victoria: the VicReN experience

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Practice-Based Research Network Development in Victoria: The VicReN Experience

4th Biennial New South Wales Primary Health Care R&E Conference 2007

Melinda Soós



PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH UNIT DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

World Health Organization (1978) Declaration of Alma-Ata: health is a fundamental human right

- Primary health care seen as key to ensuring health for all

“Primary health care seeks to extend the first level of the health system from sick care to the development of health. It seeks to protect and promote the health of defined communities and to address individual and population health problems at an early stage...”

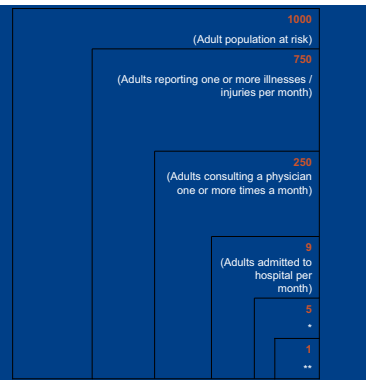
Australian Health Ministers' Council 1988; Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services 1988.



THE ECOLOGY OF MEDICAL CARE

The Ecology of Medical Care argument...

- White et al, 1961
- Updated in 2001 by Green and colleagues – same results
- Research dollars reflect an almost opposite pattern
- Justified on the basis that findings from specialist setting can be transferred to PHC setting – this claim may be overrated
- Practice-based research can help address the imbalance



* Adults referred to another physician per month
** Adults referred to a university medical centre per month



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: AUSTRALIA



Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC RED) Strategy since 2000

- Evidence-based policy and practice
- A broad, well-trained active research workforce
- Attract new researchers into the primary health care research workforce
- Identify knowledge gaps
- Ensure that evidence is taken up in primary health care policy and practice



PHC RED STRATEGY

4 major Strategy components:



- The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI)
- The Research Capacity Building Initiative (RCBI)
- A program of training awards, and investigator-driven and priority-driven clinical research grants
- The Primary Health Care Research and Information Strategy (PHCRIS)



PHC RED STRATEGY

Key Strategy objectives:

- To increase the pool of primary health care researchers
- To up-skill researchers
- To support primary health care researchers
- To ensure the research is relevant to primary health care needs and priorities
- To disseminate and facilitate the uptake of evidence into policy and practice



WHAT IS A PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH NETWORK?

'PBRNs are sustained collaborations between practitioners and academicians dedicated to developing relevant research questions, working together on study design and conduct, and translating new knowledge into practice.'

Pearce et al, 2004

Key features:

- Involve practitioners as well as academics
- Generate research
- Generate research that is collaborative and 'close to practice'
- Are ongoing
- Object of producing research is to change practice



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PCRU
PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH UNIT

WHY ARE PBRN IMPORTANT?

For two reasons:

- Practice-based research is important
- PBRN can help bridge the gap between evidence, clinical practice, and health decision-making



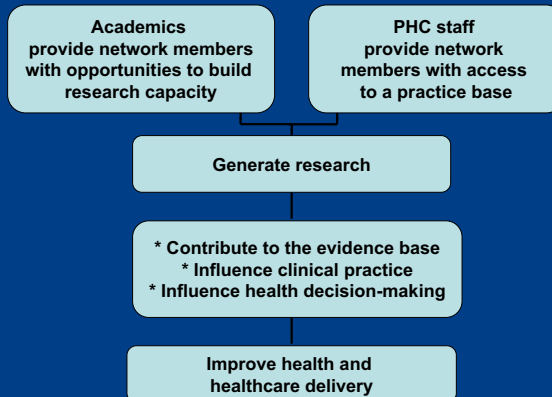
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WHAT DO PBRN DO?



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WHAT DO PBRN DO?



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PBRN: RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY

- Basic research (research into methods)
- Clinical research (to inform clinical methods)
- Health services research (improve health service industry)
- Health systems research (improve health systems and policies)
- Educational research (improve education for PHC clinicians)



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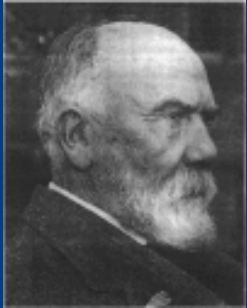
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EVIDENCE BASE

- PEACH Study: a diabetes intervention that can be sustained and embedded
- Nijmegen PBRN (the Netherlands) - PHC intervention effects on CHD, depression, childhood morbidity and diabetes
- Wessex PBRN (UK) - hay fever, osteoporosis, asthma and venepuncture
- Wisconsin PBRN (USA) – disease risk, alcoholism, asthma screening



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PBRN HISTORY



Have you any idea who this is?

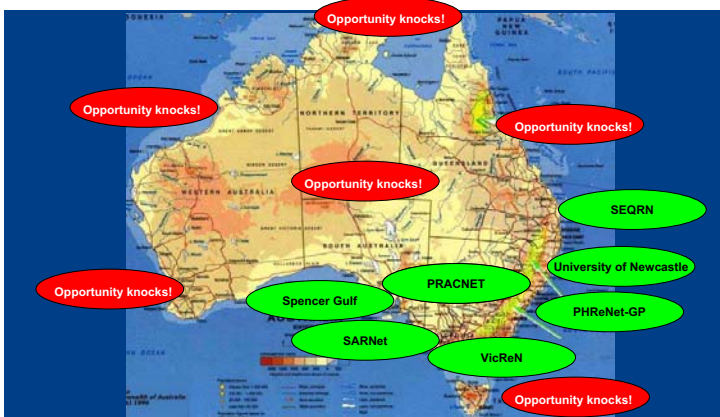


PBRN HISTORY

- PBRN origins lie in health surveillance networks
- Practice-based research conducted since late 1800s
- Most experience in the Netherlands, UK and US



PBRN HISTORY



Established May 2007

➤ A collaboration between the Primary Care Research Unit and primary care practices around Victoria

➤ Open to GPs, PNs, chiropractors, dentists, pharmacists, counsellors, practice managers...



PBRN CONSIDERATIONS

- Aim
- Funding
- Governance
 - Network leadership
 - Taxonomy of networks
- Size and Staff
- Communication
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Research Training and Productivity



Aim:

“To spur the development of important and high quality primary care research in Victoria that is relevant to clinical practice and through this to primary care policy-making.”



- July 2006 – Foundation Dinner
- September 2006 – PBRN Coordinator employed
- November 2006 – Literature review completed, network model developed, internal consultations
- December 2006 – Dinner with potential members
- February 2007 – First meeting with Foundation Members
- March 2007 – Expressions of interest from potential members and collaborators (ongoing)



- May 2007 – Second meeting with Foundation Members, marketing material developed, PBRN becomes VicReN, conference presentation
- June 2007 – New part-time coordinator and nurse members recruited
- September 2007 – Third meeting with Foundation Members, first Practice Committee member recruited
- October 2007 – Conference paper presentations, research materials developed, active researcher member recruitment, increased academic research input



FUNDING

VicReN is an initiative in knowledge exchange funded by:

- a University of Melbourne special purposes grant – Faculty of Medicines, Dentistry and Health Sciences
- the Research Capacity Building Initiative of the Primary Health Care Research Evaluation and Development Strategy, the Department of Health and Ageing



VicReN: GOVERNANCE

Reference Group

High-level network guidance

Practice Committee

Research capacity building and membership

Researchers

Lead practices/practitioners (Foundation Members) & A larger group of primary health care practices/practitioners

Subscriber Members

Members who receive information only

Reference Group

Practice Committee



Subscriber Members



VicReN: GOVERNANCE

Primary Care Research Unit Reference Group (PCRU)

➤ VicReN shares its Reference Group with the wider aims of the PCRU:

- Critical mass of multi-disciplinary primary care researchers
- Develop and market research programs
- Foster primary care research across the wider university
- Provide high quality research support and infrastructure
- Monitor research program achievements
- Provide high quality research training
- Provide mechanisms for and a culture of knowledge transfer



VicReN: GOVERNANCE

Practice Committee

- Comprised of 10-12 committed practices including the 5 Foundation Member practices
- Foundation Members are research-active practices
- Practice Committee members are also involved in research every year
- Meet quarterly; attended by academic staff members



VicReN: SIZE

Reference Group (12)

- 12 members

Practice Committee (10-12)

- 6 members

Subscriber Members (∞)

- 10+ members
- University of Melbourne Academic Members (4)
- 4 members



VicReN: LINKING MEMBERS

- Providing monthly e-bulletins
- Quarterly newsletters
- VicReN Coordinator organizes the network and facilitates all contacts
 - Practice Committee meetings
 - Links members into the wider research community



VicReN RECRUITMENT



VicReN: MONITORING & EVALUATION

Baseline data is essential

- **Survey members:** research capacity and practice content
- **Academic measures:** income, publications, higher degree qualifications, clinical guidelines and practice
- **Number of members:** member activity levels, non-project funding, levels of awareness of the network and its activities



VicReN: MONITORING & EVALUATION

How will VicReN's achievements be measured?

Regular monitoring of:

- research capacity and practice content
- its membership
- network activities



Specific evaluation time-points of:

- research training and research conduct
- member issues – needs analyses
- funding, publications, higher degree qualifications, policy



VicReN: BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY

- Aims to provide research skills training for members
- Developing research skills materials
- Involves members in research studies
- Involves members in wider university research events and programs
- Links members into research higher degree opportunities



VicReN: BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY

Primary Health Care Research and Evaluation Strategy (PHC RED) Fellowships

- Each year the Department of General Practice hosts practitioners who research a topic

The Department of General Practice offers the following academic courses:

- Postgraduate Certificate of Primary Care Nursing
- Postgraduate Diploma of Primary Care Nursing
- Masters by research
- PhD
- MD



VicReN-SUPPORTED STUDIES

- Re-organizing care for depression and related disorders (RE-ORDER)
- Health risk screening and counselling of adolescents (PARTY)
- Intervention for patients with Type 2 diabetes (PEACH)
- The detection and management of dementia
- RCT for abuse and violence of women (WEAVE)



REMUNERATION

- Not yet a feature for clinical and non-clinical members
- We are working on models of PBRN to include remuneration
- Remuneration currently derives from individual study funding
- A number of incentives are however available to members



VicReN: THE FUTURE

- A larger inclusive primary care network
- Regular research skills training
- Member input into research project development
- Ability for members to approach VicReN with research ideas: project consultancy
- Continuing access to university forums, seminars, and higher degree, fellow and funding opportunities
- More numerous and improved links with stakeholders



PBRN: THE FUTURE

- International Federation of Primary Care Research Networks (IFPCRN)
- World Organization of Family Doctors (Wonca)
- > 50 countries worldwide have PBRN
- Australia's PBRN are growing
- Australian Health Minister Tony Abbott has recently called for a proposal on PBRN
- WHO recognize primary care research is essential to close the 10/90 gap



PBRN CONSIDERATIONS

- Aim
- Funding
- Governance
 - Network leadership
 - Taxonomy of networks
- Size and Staff
- Communication
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Research Training and Productivity



PBRN LESSONS

- Only work with practices with a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for research
- Funding most likely will never be adequate
- When recruiting members, involve all key players at each practice
- Networks are not magic bullets for recruitment
- Think outside the academic box re funding and measuring research impact; don't forget stakeholders
- Be realistic about what can be achieved; setting up a PBRN takes time



RESEARCH: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Disturbing fact: the first recorded boomerang was used by people in what is now Poland, about 13,000 years before the first Australian boomerang. Early Polish boomerangs were made of mammoth tusk...



COMMENTS? QUESTIONS



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