



Evaluation report

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2004 General Practice & Primary Health Care Research Conference Brisbane 2-4 June 2004

"This conference is the highlight of the year... Thankyou for making this event so enjoyable, stimulating, and something we all look forward to coming back to year after year". (id 111)

Who attended the conference? - 312 delegates attended

Evaluation respondents identified themselves as: (respondents could indicate more than one)

Researcher or Project Officer	Academic	GP	Policy Maker	Health practitioner	Consumer Rep.	Other
74	57	23	13	9	6	6

Work settings: (respondents could indicate more than one)

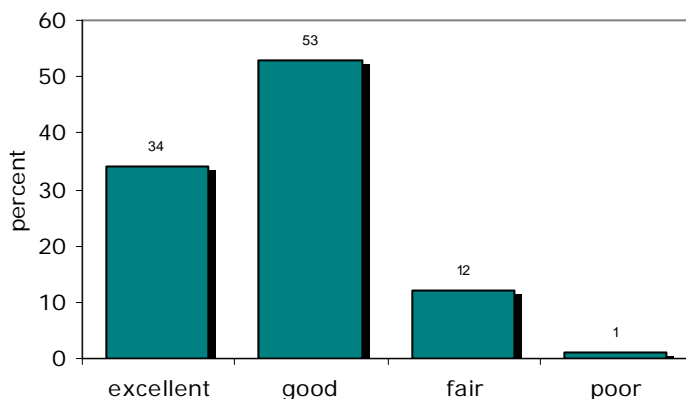
University	Division of GP	Govt	Private practice	Non-Govt Org	RACGP	Other
88	26	19	15	13	9	9

How did we evaluate the conference?

An email with a link to an online survey was sent to all delegates two days after the conference, with reminder emails sent out one and two weeks later. In total, 167 delegates completed the online evaluation survey (53.5% response rate). The survey measured delegates satisfaction with the conference speakers, format, program, and organisation, and their perceptions about how well the conference met its objectives.

How did delegates rate the conference?

Figure 1: 87% rated the conference as being *good* or *excellent*:



Delegates praised the conference because it provided:

- ♦ diverse and interesting content
- ♦ a varied format
- ♦ concurrent sessions allowing access to a wide range of research
- ♦ networking opportunities
- ♦ a supportive environment for less experienced researchers or presenters

"I think the conference is a great way to get a good taste for the broad range of innovative multi- and inter-disciplinary work that is going on out there – it's always inspiring". (id 162)

"It is the highlight of the primary care research year". (id 53)

"[The conference] has re-motivated me to continue with my current research, and also to recognise that even simple issues have a need for research". (id 85)

"[The conference] has given me new ways of thinking about issues, and some new contacts". (id 62)

"Senior researchers present were very supportive and encouraging to those of us in the early stages of career – this is very important and appreciated". (id 14)

Did the conference increase delegate's understanding of what's [not] working in the following areas?

The conference was more successful at increasing delegates' understanding of GP&PHC research, than evaluation or allied and rural health, the latter being rated the lowest.

	A lot	Some	Not at all	n/a
GP & PHC research*	31%	57%	7%	4%
Evaluation	11%	71%	13%	4%
Allied and rural health	16%	59%	22%	3%

*1% missing data

Do delegates now have increased capacity to undertake/use research?

Most respondents (80%, 85/106) indicated that they had established new contacts, had renewed enthusiasm and motivation, or gained new knowledge and understandings that would increase their capacity to undertake/use research. Respondents who reported that the conference did not increase their capacity in this way did not provide reasons (16%, 17/106).

Do delegates intend to change any work practices?

Most respondents (77%, 78/101) indicated that they intended to change work practices. These changes related to: conducting research (i.e. planning, methods, stakeholder involvement, rigour); adopting collaborative practices; and improving presentation skills or techniques.

Networking

How well did the conference provide you with opportunities to network?

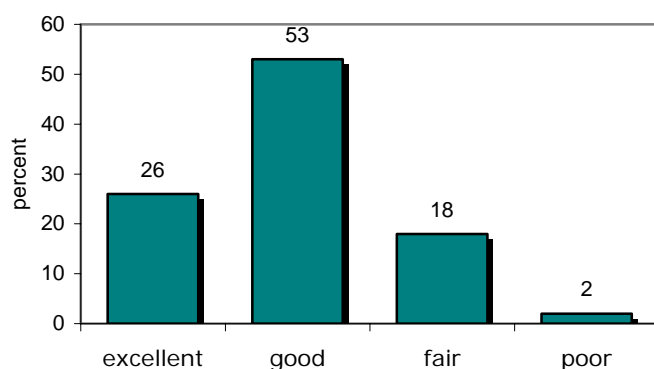
A lot	Some	n/a
54%	44%	2%

"I work in a fairly sole position and so very much benefit from the input of others and exchange of ideas". (id 107)

Networking was most frequently cited as the 'best' aspect of the conference. Delegates greatly value the opportunity to meet with others working in the field of general practice and primary health care (to establish new contacts and potential collaborators, re-establish contacts, and meet face-to-face). The results indicate there may need to be more networking opportunities provided to delegates during the conference program.

Keynote speakers

Figure 2: Overall, how do you rate the keynote speakers?

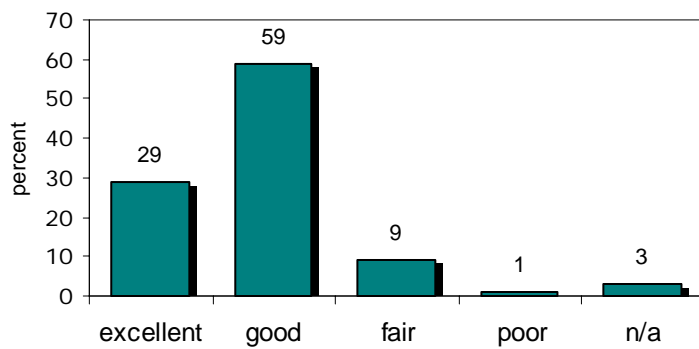


"Keynote speakers were entertaining and most had excellent presentations. I would have liked to have been more challenged by their ideas – generally there was not a lot of new ideas, or getting people to think critically about their practice." (id 43)

The keynote speakers individually singled out for praise were David Mant, Pat Anderson, Kristine Battye, and Andrew Murphy. David Mant was also singled out for criticism, with some respondents finding his presentation too clinical in its focus and providing insufficient new or challenging content. Overall, many respondents thought the keynote speakers could have been more inspiring and thought provoking.

Paper presentations

Figure 4: Overall, how do you rate the paper presentations?



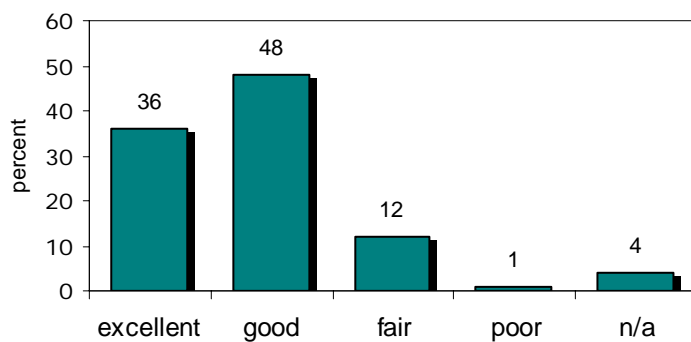
"I think it is still a good opportunity for novice presenters to get some professional development and mix with other academics, so I fully support the paper sessions being open to everyone!" (id 96)

"Only downside was being unable to attend all of them – a very tempting series of choices". (id 151)

Issues raised included: the importance of chairpersons keeping to time to allow delegate movement between rooms, session themes meant delegates could choose relevant sessions, and there were too many papers to choose from (this was given as praise not criticism).

Poster presentations

Figure 5: Overall, how do you rate the poster presentations?



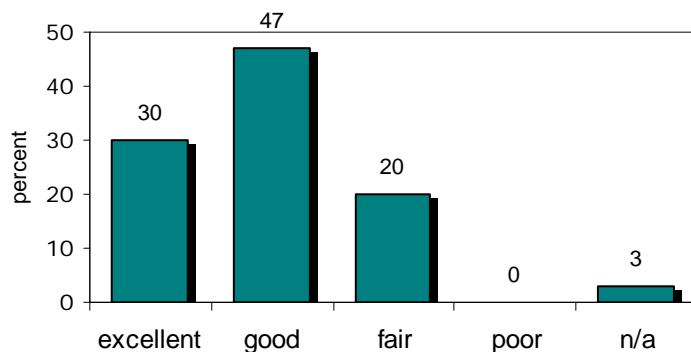
"An excellent avenue for covering a lot of ideas – especially with copies of the posters available to take and reflect on – I like the format of having poster sessions and giving them credibility rather than making them lost cousins". (id 62)

"Initially I was dismayed that there were only poster presentations for a whole session! But once I got into it – it was great. I think more conferences should have something like this". (id 95)

"The number per session is a bit overwhelming". (id 92)

Display posters

Figure 6: Overall, how do you rate the display posters?

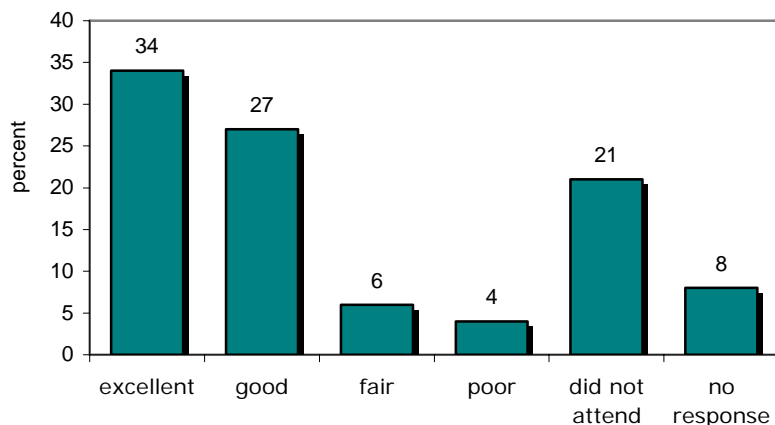


"Most posters try to pack in too much information, making them difficult to read – I thought the point of a poster was to display key points that are quickly and easily read". (id 139)

Some respondents commented that it was difficult finding time to look at the display posters, and many felt that the posters had too much information crowded onto them.

The Hypothetical session

Figure 3: How do you rate the Hypothetical session?



"Stimulating and entertaining. It is good to have a session in a distinctly different format – it refreshes your thinking". (id 90)

"A real issue, well researched and comprehensive – I actually learned a lot, as well as thoroughly enjoying myself – the blend between entertainment and learning worked well, and complemented the rest of the conference [and] did not detract from it". (id 114)

Respondents who enjoyed the hypothetical session found it a useful tool to highlight important health, research, and funding issues. They liked the light-hearted and entertaining format, and the way it diversified to the conference format. Some respondents found it amusing but not particularly informative. Most respondents, even those who praised the session, found it 15-30 minutes too long.

Q&A and audience discussion time

How do you rate the time allocated to Q&A and audience discussion?

Too much	Enough	Not enough
0%	89%	11%

"[The conference is] a great catalyst for interaction between like-minded researchers". (id 152)

Organisation, catering, venue

The organisation, catering and venue were all rated as good or excellent. Some delegates would have preferred more seating during lunch, and some wrote that they would have liked to have fruit available. As fruit was actually provided it may mean there was not enough or that it was not conveniently located. Many praised the warm locale of Brisbane and the provision of a coffee/hot chocolate machine.

Delegates enjoyed dinner on the river boat as an unusual and relaxing setting, although a few thought the quality of the food could have been better for the price charged.

Successful changes

Following the evaluation of the 2003 GP&PHC Research Conference, a number of changes were successfully implemented in 2004, including:

- ◆ more Q&A and audience discussion/interaction time
- ◆ earlier access to the program and registration at the pre-conference workshops
- ◆ poster display and tea break area having more room

Room for improvement

For continual quality improvement, future conferences may need to include:

- ◆ written guidelines for chairpersons regarding timekeeping during concurrent sessions
- ◆ more time allocated for networking purposes
- ◆ encourage keynote speakers to include challenging content in their presentations
- ◆ major one-topic sessions, such as the Hypothetical, to be shorter in duration