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MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Indigenous Health launches primary health care research publication

The Hon Warren Snowden MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery launched *Snapshot of Australian primary health care research 2010* at the annual Primary Health Care Research Conference in Darwin, today.

The 3rd in a series of annual publications *Snapshot* is written by 11 research fellows who have been awarded grants through the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development Strategyⁱ. This 2010 edition is relevant to the key directions of primary health care reform in Australia.

The studies focus on ways to tackle Indigenous and rural disadvantage through community engagement, better management of chronic diseases and improved capacity of general practice nurses and GPs.

Professor Tom Brett's research assesses the work intentions and motivations of GPs to ascertain the barriers and disincentives they face when considering whether to remain in the profession. Over the course of 2 studies he and his co-researchers at University of Notre Dame, Fremantle determined the reasons for early retirement or a career change among GPs aged 45 – 65 years, then targeted young doctors to determine the factors involved in choosing whether or not to specialise in general practice:

“Factors such as excessive workloads, diminishing job satisfaction and increased bureaucracy were identified as obstacles for doctors remaining in general practice and often prompted them to retire early. For younger doctors, specialising in general practice offered career flexibility and improved lifestyle factors, as the working hours of a GP is a welcome change to the shift patterns of a hospital.”

Professor Brett's research also highlighted however, that young doctors were aware of the same barriers the senior doctors had observed, and heavy workloads, poor job satisfaction and remuneration were often heralded as disincentives for them pursuing a career in general practice.

Another study in *Snapshot* looked at an alternative treatment for chronic Achilles tendon pain, Tendinosis, a condition often associated with sporting injuries and athletes, such as David Beckham who recently tore his tendon in a soccer game. But Tendinosis also affects people with a sedentary lifestyle.

Accepted by health professionals as a notoriously difficult condition to treat, researchers from Griffith University in Queensland embarked on a randomised clinical trial to treat it with

prolotherapy- a combination therapy of glucose and local anaesthetic which is injected around the tendon. The major benefit of prolotherapy is that it can be administered in conjunction with an exercise program in primary health care settings, by GPs, podiatrists or physiotherapists.

Kent Sweeting, researcher at Griffith University said:

“What was revealing about this clinical trial was that when we administered prolotherapy alone, without the exercise program, it was still proven to be an effective treatment for the condition. This is especially important for patients who are unable to participate in, or who do not respond to, a physical exercise program.”

Other studies featured in *Snapshot* include:

- ⇒ Identifying barriers to treating high blood pressure effectively; research which led to the development of national hypertension management guidelines
- ⇒ Up-skilling social workers to offer clients mental health care strategies
- ⇒ Identifying indicators to monitor the performance of health services in delivering maternal and infant health to remote-dwelling Aboriginal families
- ⇒ Exploring techniques to help people modify lifestyle factors; engaging people through one-to-one or group counseling or issuing them with written public health information was likely to result in positive changes to their behaviour regarding smoking or physical activity
- ⇒ Highlighting the significant role Australian General Practice Nurses play in delivering primary health care services
- ⇒ Using computerized methods to review a patient's chronic disease management
- ⇒ Assessing the perceptions of health determinants of communities in rural South Australia
- ⇒ Improving the management of heart failure in rural South Australia
- ⇒ Consulting with women who have an intellectual disability to ascertain their experiences of sexual relationships and knowledge of sexuality education, to better equip them with knowledge and protection skills.

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Minister Snowden will be available to speak about the *Snapshot* at a short press conference held 09:35-09:45 at the conference venue.

Professor Brett will be speaking more about his research when he gives a paper presentation this afternoon, and is available for media interviews by phone or in person. Other researchers will also be available to talk about the research projects highlighted in *Snapshot*. **Please contact Fae Heaselgrave**, communications officer for the conference convenor, Primary Health Care Research and Information Service, **on 0432 971291** to schedule your time slot.

Notes to editors

Snapshot of Australian primary health care research 2010

The Australian Government has funded the PHCRED Strategy since 2000 to improve Australia's capacity to produce high quality primary health care research and supports large and small research projects, researchers at all stages of their careers, and large-scale collaborations between health services, universities and communities.

Professor Tom Brett is Director of the General Practice and Primary Health Care Research Unit at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, WA.

Kent Sweeting works in Performance, Podiatry and Physio at a practice in Brisbane.

Snapshot is available to download from:

Hard copies of the publication are available by calling the PHC RIS Assist line on 1800 025 882

Primary Health Care Research and Information Service

The Primary Health Care Research Conference (formerly the GP & PHC Research Conference) is convened by the Primary Health Care Research and Information Service and run in partnership with the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, the Australian Association of Academic Primary Care and the Human Resources for Health Knowledge Hub, one of four knowledge hubs funded by AusAID. The conference is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

PHC RIS is a national primary health care organisation based at Flinders University in South Australia in the Discipline of General Practice. PHC RIS is responsible for generating, managing and sharing information and knowledge to inform, influence and enhance primary health care practice, policy and research by working in partnership with its key stakeholders: the Divisions of General Practice Network, primary health care researchers and primary care policy advisors.

More information is available at the [PHC RIS website](#) or by calling 1800 025 882.

Hon Warren Snowden

As Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health, and Regional Services Delivery, the Hon Warren Snowden has responsibility for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health, Men's health and Papua New Guinea cross border health issues. For more information visit the Minister's [portfolio pages](#) on the Department of Health and Ageing website.

Minister Snowden opened the conference today and launched Snapshot alongside the Central Australian Remote Practitioners Association (CARPA) Standard Treatment Manual (STM) 5th edition, available from the [CARPA website](#)

ⁱ Funding through the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) Strategy is provided by the Department of Health and Ageing.