The Department of General Practice (DGP) was established in 1975 and is one of the largest general practice teaching departments in Australia with over 30 full-time equivalent academic, research and professional staff. It was incorporated into the newly formed School of Primary Health Care within the faculty in 2001.

The DGP has a proud tradition of academic excellence in teaching and research and is involved in three principle areas: teaching in one of the few remaining undergraduate medical courses in Australia, postgraduate studies and general practice and primary care research.
Undergraduate

The Department of General Practice has a high profile in undergraduate teaching, both in delivery and coordination of the 5-year curriculum. Teaching focuses on the integration of clinical skills, problem-solving and communication skills, to enable holistic evidence based care of patients and their families within the community. The philosophy of the Department is to foster an enthusiastic and caring approach to teaching students, with well-structured programs, transparent assessment and feedback, pastoral care and flexibility.

The Department of General Practice coordinates and administers the teaching of clinical skills in years 1 & 2 as well as a 9 week rotation in year 4. During the year 4 GP program students participate in an innovative mixture of lectures (on general practice problems), tutorials, practicals and simulation sessions where they practice consulting skills & discuss cases. Teaching is primarily performed by enthusiastic and motivated clinicians who work in general practice.

Postgraduate

The Department of General Practice is well known for its contribution to continuing professional development and continuing medical education of established general practitioners. This takes the form of postgraduate award courses (Diploma and Masters in Family Medicine, Graduate Certificate in Medical Acupuncture), as well as annual update courses for general practitioners. Over 1300 doctors have now graduated from Monash’s postgraduate award courses in family medicine and more than 4000 GPs have attended refresher courses over the past two decades.

Our innovative suite of family medicine and medical acupuncture courses has been designed specifically for general practitioners and family physicians. These off-campus courses let students learn at their own pace to balance study with work and achieve the satisfaction of completing a prestigious postgraduate degree in a unique clinical discipline. Our programs offer the opportunity to link continuing medical education with the rewards, satisfaction and opportunities that come with a postgraduate qualification.

The department is well known nationally and internationally for its scholarly contribution to general practice education, which includes the development of the consulting skills teaching program and textbooks, including:

- ‘General practice’, ‘Patient education’ and ‘Practice tips’ by Professor John Murtagh AM
- ‘General practice psychiatry’ edited by Professor Leon Piterman AM
- ‘Women’s health in general practice’ by Professor Danielle Mazza
- ‘Computing and information management in general practice’ by A/Professor Peter Schattner
- ‘New frontiers in medicine: The body as the shadow of the soul’, ‘The essence of health’ and ‘General practice: the integrative approach’ by Dr Craig Hassed.
We undertake translational research in the general practice setting, seeking to improve both the quality of care delivered in the general practice setting and to optimise primary care practice and health care systems. Our portfolio of work includes research projects and tenders focused on several major themes:

- chronic disease prevention and management
- multidisciplinary care
- eHealth strategies in primary care
- guideline development and implementation
- GP and interprofessional education and professional development
- practice capacity.

We have expertise in researching innovative technologies in these fields (particularly the use of IT) and a special interest in:

- particular patient groups (women’s health, infant and child health, men’s health and refugee health)
- improving access to care for populations with specific needs (migrants and refugees, family violence victim/survivors).

The Department of General Practice is currently engaged in several major research projects. Examples include:

**Investigating symptoms of lung cancer: a guide for GPs**

Mazza, Olver, Jones

Commissioned by Cancer Australia this project aims to provide general practitioners with evidence based guidance on the investigation and referral of patients with symptoms of lung cancer. The project comprises three phases: the development of an evidence based guide for GPs, creation of a national directory of lung cancer multidisciplinary teams and the development of online GP education and resources to support implementation of the guide.

**Implementing guidelines to routinely prevent chronic disease in General Practice.**

Harris, Zwar, Litt, Mazza, vanDriel, Taylor, Russell, et al.

The ‘Preventive Evidence into Practice’ (PEP) study aims to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention to improve the implementation of preventive care guidelines for cardiovascular disease in general practice. It will achieve this by identifying the barriers and facilitators of organisational and practice change and developing and evaluating an innovative and flexible model for guideline implementation. This NHMRC partnerships grant involves the RACGP, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and Bupa.

**CCA Project – Collaborative Care Cluster Australia**

Geogheff, Piterman, Russell, Schattner, Jones

CdmNet is an internet based tool which has been developed to assist care planning for chronic diseases in primary care. Funded by a grant from the Victorian Science Agenda and Monash University, and in collaboration with Precedence HealthCare, the CCA project aims to promote best practice in GP management of patients diagnosed with a chronic disease, in particular the use of item numbers 721, 723, 732, and 900 and involves researching the impact of the cdmNET tool on care planning in general practice.

**The ‘touchscreen’ project**

Sanson-Fisher, Paul, D’Este, Carey, Inder, Yoong, Zwar, Makeham, Russell, Mazza

This study aims to assess how practical and useful an electronic patient data collection tool is in surgery waiting rooms. We will be assessing both patient and GP attitudes towards collecting vital patient health data electronically prior to consultations and whether this is a positive step towards assisting GPs to provide the best possible care for minimising their patients health risk status. The project is currently completing data collection.

Recent success by our early career researchers and higher degree research students:

- **NHMRC early career research fellowship**
  Medical pluralism and health-seeking among Indian-Australians and Anglo-Australians with depression. Dr Bianca Brijnath

- **RACGP Chris Silagy research scholarship**
  The Development of an Intervention to Improve the Delivery and Uptake of Preventive Health Care for Young Children. Dr Karyn Alexander (PhD Candidate).

- **RACGP Family Medical Care, Education and Research Grant**
  Informing the development of a new model of care to improve the fertility awareness of sub-fertile women in primary health care. Professor Danielle Mazza and Ms Kerry Hampton (PhD Candidate).
International programs

As a department within the faculty, recognised for its contribution to internationalisation, the Department of General Practice has been a major contributor to capacity building in the area of academic general practice internationally. This has included training of Masters graduates in Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Fiji, Thailand and Gulf countries including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Currently Masters students as well as Malaysian Fellowship students reside on campus in various programs. The department also hosts international PhD students and others enrolled in off-campus degree programs.

In addition, the DGP has a formal partnership with the Department of Family Medicine at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada (www.dfmqueens.ca/welcome/overview.php). This alliance is developing collaborative work in the areas of postgraduate and undergraduate medical training, human resources and recruitment, primary health care research, and health policy. Exchanges of postgraduate trainees and faculty are underway and a variety of projects are proceeding forward.

The DGP is also actively engaged in a program of work to assist in the training of Chinese general practitioners. Currently we are engaged in teaching cohorts of Chinese doctors twice a year to provide them with an orientation to Australian general practice and primary care.