



Practice Nurse Work Survey - Overview

Background: Although nurses have worked in general practice in Australia for many decades, recent government initiatives have contributed to significant growth and evolution in this sector of the health workforce. Practice Nurses are becoming key providers of primary health care in Australia, with more than half of all practices now employing a Practice Nurse. But there is a critical lack of detailed information about the role that Practice Nurses are playing in the provision of primary health care in Australia.

The project will provide information about duties and tasks undertaken by Practice Nurses at a level of detail that is not currently available. Policy-makers can utilise this information in policy and planning for Practice Nurse support, education and training, and for provision of primary health care.

Aim: This project aims to describe the services currently being provided by Practice Nurses (PNs) in Australian general practice. Key research questions will investigate: the clinical tasks currently being undertaken by PNs; other tasks and activities; and key determinants of different patterns of tasks and functions performed by PNs (including practice characteristics and PN characteristics).

Methods: National cross-sectional survey of nurses working in a general practice setting. The target sample size is 500 nurses.

Data collection will use a questionnaire and an 'encounter form' modelled on those used in the BEACH series of studies of General Practitioners (Family Medicine Research Centre, University of Sydney). The questionnaire covers:

- background characteristics of the participating nurse
- profile of the practice at which the nurse works
- duties performed by the nurse in a typical week.

The encounter form collects data about contacts with individual patients, including unidentified information about the patient (age and sex), reason for the consultation, services or procedures provided by the nurse, and duration.

Each participating nurse will complete encounter forms for 50 consecutive patient contacts, providing data on 25,000 nurse-patient encounters.

The study has been approved by the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH Ref 2006/1019).

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