

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Using the *Australian and
New Zealand Journal of
Public Health* as a research
and teaching resource

**Volume 3: What general
practitioners can learn from public
health research**

Editor: Genevieve A. Cowie



The e-book from PHAA

This e-book includes a selection of papers from *ANZJPH* relevant to clinicians. Many other examples are to be found in the *ANZJPH* archives.

In publishing this e-book, our primary aim is to provide a service to PHAA members. PHAA members should be able to access this virtual book, free, through the PHAA website (members' resources area), where you will find the hyperlink for each paper.

Non-members are encouraged to become PHAA members in order to access this resource (as well as many other benefits). Those in organisations with institutional membership of PHAA will be able to gain access through their libraries.

Several further e-books are planned, and suggestions for additional topics are welcome.

Foreword

Genevieve A. Cowie

There is much to be found in public health research that is relevant to clinicians. The *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* is a valuable source of such information and this e-book has been produced to highlight articles of direct relevance to general practitioners. This should enable 'big picture' population-based information to be used in direct clinical care as well as to explore some professional issues affecting practitioners themselves. In addition to touching on issues commonly encountered in general practice, this book also unashamedly emphasises research in those needy, hard-to-reach groups that disproportionately do not present to general practitioners along with some strategies with which to engage them.

The first section deals with some practice pointers for primary health care. The role of continence physiotherapy as a low-cost, low-risk and effective first line treatment for the common problem of female urinary stress incontinence is confirmed. Another paper concerns the much under-recognised problem of fetal alcohol syndrome; it is included to show the importance of early correct diagnosis and consequent opportunities for early intervention and prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome in subsequent children. A paper on the disturbingly high frequency of benzodiazepine prescription in elderly general practice patients is included to encourage personal reflection of general practitioners on their own prescribing habits and collective action against the constraints of the Australian healthcare system and society that make alternative approaches to insomnia and anxiety so challenging.

The active part that primary health care can take in chronic disease prevention can be seen in the next section. The brief nature of a minimal nutrition intervention for increasing folate consumption makes it achievable for general practitioners, and where practice nurses are available to administer it, could be even more widely used. The next paper shows that New Zealanders are being given physical activity advice in the primary care setting, but that this could be much more widely practised. If you are confused about the relative merits of the plethora of smoking cessation interventions available, a good summary of the available evidence for best practice techniques in Australian health care settings is also included.

A Queensland study shows there is much work to be done to modify key cancer risk behaviours. Although much of this work must take place at a population level, clinicians may assist their patients through identifying these risk factors in individual patients, providing education to such patients about risks and ongoing intervention and support.

General practitioners are at the forefront in fighting infectious disease, including vaccine administration. It is clearly important that clinicians' knowledge of immunisation is accurate; this issue is explored in a survey by Leask and colleagues. Are *you*, your staff and your patients who are health care workers adequately protected

against vaccine preventable diseases? Do you presume that the systems in place at health care workers' place of employment have adequately tackled the issue? We include a study that shows that this may not be the case.

The tricky issue of how to protect against both mosquito-borne disease and skin cancer-causing ultraviolet radiation simultaneously is addressed by Webb and Russell. This is especially relevant for those living in areas such as far north Queensland where vector mosquitoes are present that bite during the day. This study gives recommendations concerning the use of combined repellent/ sunscreen preparations. Such advice can readily be conveyed in a primary healthcare setting.

If you thought you were safe from mosquito-borne disease in New Zealand, then think again. A serious warning is given to New Zealand public health and biosecurity authorities as well as clinicians on the almost inevitability of serious outbreaks of exotic arboviral infections there, many of them originating in nearby Australia. For general practitioners and specialist physicians alike, arbovirus infection must be included amongst the list of differential diagnoses of polyarthritis with fever so that the appropriate testing and public health responses may be initiated in a timely fashion and major outbreaks avoided.

Do you know if your patients are in contact with birds? To complete the section on infectious disease we have included an excellent and highly clinically relevant summary of what is known about the major bird-related causes of respiratory illness in Australia with their overlapping clinical features and their highly variable severity.

The next few sections deal with a range of hard-to-reach groups, the first being young people. Why don't more young people go to general practitioners with their health concerns? Bernard and colleagues showed that while there is some congruence between the perceptions of general practitioners and young people on some aspects of health provision and issues of concern to them, there are other areas where significant misunderstandings occur. General practitioners often mistook the barriers that adolescents perceive to presenting for help and have quite different ideas about how to tackle these barriers. While not all these barriers can be easily dealt with by individual medical practitioners as some health service restructuring would be required, practitioners do need to be open to alternative methods of service delivery and education for young people about processes for obtaining help for their health issues.

The next study examines what a group of young university students believe about emergency contraception. Although this study uses a convenience rather than a random sample, it demonstrates that ignorance about the availability, appropriate use, mode of action and safety surrounding the use of emergency contraception is likely to be severely restricting its use, at least in this important target group. Health professionals should be mindful of the need of young people for further education about the use and availability of emergency contraception and to correct misconceptions likely to have been absorbed from the general public.

A novel strategy for reaching young rural men for an often hidden problem is shown by the success of recruiting from football clubs for screening for chlamydia infection. Although this study was primarily designed for sexually transmissible infection research and education in an understudied population, it is certainly a strategy that could be adapted by general practitioners to better serve their local community, especially if definitive treatment can also be offered.

The next section concentrates on highly marginalised groups, the first being a cross-sectional study that examined the mental health of a group of homosexually active men. Knowing that such men are at high risk of depression and the various factors that are associated with this depression may assist general practitioners in identifying and mitigating this health inequity.

Gilles and colleagues' paper describing the health of largely Indigenous inmates at a regional Western Australian prison makes visible the poor health of an extremely marginalised population. It is included as it shows opportunities for interventions both at a primary care and public health level which have the potential to make a large difference to the health of inmates and the communities to which they return.

A systematic search of Medline-listed papers gives practical clinical advice on the screening and management of sexually transmissible infections in sex workers. In addition, it looks at the issue of how much protection condoms really give from the various infections as well as pregnancy, information that is valuable for both clinicians and their patients.

Homeless people are a vulnerable group at high risk of liver infection and chronic liver disease yet they are hard to reach with preventive measures such as immunisation against hepatitis A and B. We include a paper that shows that a successful immunisation program can be achieved through a well-organised clinic, long-established, accepted and utilised by homeless people with pointers for further increasing completion rates. Similarly, the success of a program using an accelerated hepatitis B immunisation schedule for young drug users is described, its completion rates greatly enhanced by the measures taken to reduce barriers to vaccine administration.

The final section deals with particularly disadvantaged culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Humanitarian entrants into Australia comprise a marginalised population with great personal and public health needs. Raman and colleagues illustrate the dearth of refugee-specific services available for children and young people in NSW despite such needs. A range of models of care for refugees will probably be needed – general practitioners are likely to be involved in many of these. One such model for humanitarian entrants in a regional area is described in a further paper. Thus far, however, none of the models of care used is comprehensive; successful subsequent transfer of patient care to community general practitioners remains problematic. Needless to say, such services need appropriate support, staffing, funding, protocols and service linkages. Those general practitioners attempting to see refugees in community practices find themselves largely unsupported by effective caseworkers, as detailed in a reply

from a Melbourne general practitioner. There is much room for both policy and practice improvement in the comprehensive health assessment and treatment of this highly vulnerable population.

Medical practitioners are often frustrated by late presentations with cancers by Indigenous people. Why are they less likely to access and continue treatment and have such different treatment outcomes to the rest of the population? Shahid and Thompson's overview of Indigenous cancer beliefs in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US may help practitioners and policy makers better understand the spiritual and cultural issues that impact on this area of healthcare and consequently provide better care to Indigenous people.

Do you know if your patients are being subjected to domestic violence? High rates of past and present partner violence were found on direct questioning of women presenting at a Māori health provider clinic. The study shows that such direct questioning in a primary healthcare context can be useful in identifying a serious risk to the health and safety of women and their children, whether Māori or not. Their discussion of appropriate responses of the healthcare system to family violence in a Māori context is a call to arms for those working in primary healthcare.

This e-book ends with a study of the social and cultural issues affecting overseas trained doctors who work in Indigenous health. It discusses the complexities of successful communication with patients, colleagues and communities across different cultures and the effects that this may have on transition, integration and retention of overseas trained doctors in Indigenous primary health services.

This e-book is intended to demonstrate that there is much to be found in the Journal both to interest general practitioners and to directly influence your practice. Such articles may now be even more easily accessed as the older issues of the Journal have also come online. We hope this sample of what can be found within its pages, whether paper or virtual, will encourage clinicians to browse the Journal for the many articles that are of direct relevance to your practice.

Acknowledgement

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Practice pointers

The costs and benefits of physiotherapy as first-line treatment for female stress urinary incontinence

Patricia B Neumann, Karen A Grimmer, Ruth E Grant and Virginia A Gill

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2005; 29(5):416-421

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2005.tb00220.x>

Health professionals' knowledge, practice and opinions about fetal alcohol syndrome and alcohol consumption in pregnancy

Jan Payne, Elizabeth Elliott, Heather D'Antoine, Colleen O'Leary, Anne Mahony, Eric Haan and Carolyn Bower

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2005; 29(6):558-564

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2005.tb00251.x>

Benzodiazepine prescribing in elderly Australian general practice patients

Alice Windle, Elizabeth Elliott, Katherine Duszynski and Vivienne Moore

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2007; 31(4):379-381

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2007.00091.x>

Chronic disease prevention

A randomised trial of the short-term effect of a minimal nutrition intervention in general practice

Siobhan Hickling, Matthew Knuiman, Konrad Jamrozik and Joseph Hung

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2007; 31(5):414-418

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2007.00110.x>

Physical activity advice in the primary care setting: results of a population study in New Zealand

Karen Croteau, Grant Schofield and Grant McLean

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2006; 30(3):262-267

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2006.tb00868.x>

Effectiveness of smoking cessation interventions: review of evidence and implications for best practice in Australian health care settings

Margaret Miller and Lisa Wood

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2003; 27(3):300-309

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2003.tb00399.x>

The Queensland Cancer Risk Study: behavioural risk factor results

Tracey DiSipio, Carla Rogers, Beth Newman, David Whiteman, Elizabeth Eakin, Lin Fritschi and Joanne Aitken

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2006; 30(4):375-382

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2006.tb00852.x>

Infectious disease

Immunisation attitudes, knowledge and practices of health professionals in regional NSW

Julie Leask, Helen E Quinn, Kristine Macartney, Marianne Trent, Peter Massey, Chris Carr and John Turahui

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2008; 32(3):224-229

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2008.00220.x>

Healthcare workers and immunity to infectious diseases

Sanjyot Vagholkar, Jude Ng, Raymond C Chan, Jeremy M Bunker and Nicholas A Zwar

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2008; 32(4):367-371

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2008.00257.x>

Insect repellents and sunscreen: implications for personal protection strategies against mosquito-borne disease

Cameron E Webb and Richard C Russell

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2009; 33(5):485-490

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00435.x>

Is New Zealand prepared to deal with arboviral diseases?

Jose G B Derraik and Charles H Calisher

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2004; 28(1):27-31

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2004.tb00628.x>

Pet birds and risks of respiratory disease in Australia: a review

Jessica Gorman, Angus Cook, Chantal Ferguson, Paul van Buynder, Stan Fenwick, Philip Weinstein

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2009; 33(2):167-172

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00365.x>

Young people

Access to primary health care for Australian adolescents: how congruent are the perspectives of health service providers and young people, and does it matter?

Diana Bernard, Susan Quine, Melissa Kang, Garth Alperstein, Tim Usherwood, David Bennett, Michael Booth

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2004; 28(5):487-492

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2004.tb00033.x>

Emergency contraception - knowledge and attitudes in a group of Australian university students

Helen Calabretto

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2009; 33(3):234-239

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00381.x>

The feasibility of recruiting young men in rural areas from community football clubs for STI screening

Judy Gold, Jane Hocking and Margaret Hellard

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2007; 31(3):243-246

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2007.00055.x>

Marginalised groups

Social factors associated with Major Depressive Disorder in homosexually active, gay men attending general practices in urban Australia

Limin Mao, Michael R Kidd, Gary Rogers, Gavin Andrews, Christy E Newman, Adrian Booth, Deborah C Saltman, Susan C Kippax

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2009; 33(1):83-86

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00344.x>

Prison health and public health responses at a regional prison in Western Australia

Marisa Gilles, Elysia Swingler, Corryn Craven and Ann Larson

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2008; 32(6):549-553

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2008.00308.x>

Maintaining sexual health in commercial sex workers in Australia: condom effectiveness, screening, and management after acquiring sexually transmissible infections

P Heather Lyttle and Sandra C Thompson

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2004; 28(4):351-359

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2004.tb00443.x>

Vaccination against hepatitis A and B in persons subject to homelessness in inner Sydney: vaccine acceptance, completion rates and immunogenicity

Roslyn G. Poulos, Mark J. Ferson, Karen J. Orr, Michele A. McCarthy, Susan J. Botham, Jerome M. Stern, Adrienne Lucey

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2010; 34(2):130-135

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2010.00496.x>

An accelerated hepatitis B vaccination schedule for young drug users

Nich Rogers and Dan I Lubman

Aust N Z J Public Health. 2005; 29(4):305-307

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2005.tb00197.x>

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

- Matching health needs of refugee children with services:
how big is the gap?
Shanti Raman, Nicholas Wood, Murray Webber, Kellie-Ann Taylor, David Isaacs *Aust N Z J Public Health* 2009; 33(5):466-470
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00431.x>
- Matching health needs of refugee children with services: how big
is the gap? - A response
John Scopel *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2010; 34(3):334-335
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2010.00537.x>
- A multidisciplinary primary healthcare clinic for newly arrived humanitarian
entrants in regional NSW: model of service delivery and summary of
preliminary findings
Gillian Gould, Kerri Viney, Michele Greenwood, John Kramer, Paul Corben *Aust N Z J Public Health* 2010; 34(3):326-329
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2010.00535.x>
- An overview of cancer and beliefs about the disease in Indigenous
people of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US
Shaouli Shahid and Sandra C Thompson *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2009; 33(2):109-118
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2009.00355.x>
- Partner violence prevalence among women attending a Māori
health provider clinic
Jane Koziol-McLain, Maria Rameka, Lynne Giddings, Elaine Fyfe, Julie Gardiner *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2007; 31(2):143-148
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2007.00032.x>
- Overseas-trained doctors in Indigenous rural health services:
negotiating professional relationships across cultural domains
*Angela Durey, Peter Hill, Rachelle Arkles, Marisa Gilles, Katia Peterson,
Susan Wearne, Condy Canuto, Lisa Jackson Pulver* *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2008; 32(6):512-518
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2008.00301.x>

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health is the Journal of the Public Health Association of Australia and is published six times a year, in February, April, June, August, October and December. Its contents are subject to normal refereeing processes. Finished discussions of research projects are the staple diet of the Journal, but there is space for reviews, views and historical pieces from time to time.

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