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**20  
25**



**MonREN**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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# Acknowledgement of Country

*MonREN acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land we work on, the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nations, and the Traditional Owners of the Lands from which you are reading from. We would like to pay our respects to the Elders past and present.*

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# Our Mission

Monash University's Practice-Based Research and Education Network (MonREN) is an initiative which supports general practitioners, practice nurses and practice managers to lead and participate in meaningful research that improves the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Practice-Based Research Networks (PBRNs), such as MonREN, are recognised as vital infrastructure for primary care research. They enable collaborative, healthcare professionals-led, inquiry-grounded research. This bottom-up model ensures research is responsive to community needs and directly informs improvements to patient care and population health outcomes.



The Australian Association for Academic Primary Care, and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners have affirmed the critical role of PBRNs in advancing research excellence and improving community health outcomes.

MonREN aims to:

- Generate high-quality, practice-based evidence – grounded in real-world primary care.
- Strengthen workforce satisfaction and retention by diversifying career pathways for primary health professionals.
- Build connected, locally embedded research communities.
- Accelerate translation by bridging academic research and everyday clinical practice.

An established research network provides streamlined access to practice settings, enabling more efficient, rigorous and relevant research for both investigators and healthcare professionals. With a strategic focus on Melbourne's south-east and eastern regions, MonREN addresses a clear need for coordinated, collaborative primary care research infrastructure.

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# Executive Summary

MonREN continues to focus on three priority areas to ensure a sustainable and high-performing Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN):

1. Organisational stability, governance and strategic growth.
2. Research excellence and education.
3. Engagement and support for general practice professionals.

This annual report highlights key activities undertaken throughout the year, research projects to which MonREN has contributed, and the organisations with which we have partnered.

MonREN congratulates Honours student Iris Gu, who completed her project with High Distinction. Supporting emerging researchers and fostering academic excellence remains central to MonREN's mission.

In 2025, MonREN delivered multiple Academic Journal Club events, and three PBRN-focused workshops, including an international online workshop in collaboration with Aarhus University, Denmark.

Looking ahead to 2026, MonREN seeks to expand and enhance its program of events to strengthen member engagement and grow the network.

We will continue to build research contributions, while broadening our consulting services to better support researchers and primary care partners.

Our team extends sincere thanks to all who have contributed to MonREN over the past year, particularly members of the Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group.

We also acknowledge the leadership and commitment of MonREN management team: Emiko Hunt, Professor Grant Russell, and Associate Professor Chris Barton.





## A MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR GRANT RUSSELL

On behalf of the MonREN team, I am pleased to present our second annual report.

This has been a year of consolidation and growth as we continue to strengthen community-led research across Melbourne's east and south-east. While this report outlines our major activities, I would like to highlight a few key achievements.

Too often, GPs have been excluded from decisions about research conducted in their practices and with their patients. MonREN takes a different view: research in general practice must include GPs as study investigators, with appropriate reimbursement for their professional time. With the support of Monash Partners, our region's Academic Health Science Centre, this approach is gaining traction. Our advocacy has helped secure more realistic funding arrangements for GPs and practices contributing to research.

We have strengthened external partnerships, embedded health consumer input more consistently in our work, and increased our visibility within the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University.

MonREN also played a key role in implementing INTEGRATE, supported by the Victorian Government's South-East Metro Health Services Partnership. The study examined access to public hospital clinics in south-east Melbourne and identified a system under strain, marked by limited transparency, inefficiencies and barriers to access. Practice members worked alongside hospital staff and consultants to establish clear priorities for reform. Innovation trials will commence in the coming years.

This report also showcases the contributions of our students, along with education initiatives and resources developed to support members. We are proud to contribute to the TROPHI network in outer eastern Melbourne and to the new Medical Research Future Fund TRANSFORM trial addressing healthcare integration across three major Melbourne regions.

Practice-based research networks rely on high-quality administration. We are fortunate to have Emiko Hunt as our Network Manager. Her expertise in business, marketing and strategic planning has strengthened MonREN's professional development and operational capability.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to the GPs, practice teams and patients who partner with us. We look forward to strengthening these relationships further and welcome conversations with anyone who shares our commitment to high-quality primary care.

**Professor Grant Russell, Department of General Practice, Monash University**



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# 2025 AT A GLANCE



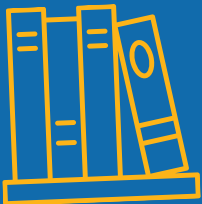
## Primary Healthcare Research

MonREN supported 10 research projects throughout the year. This support included: grant submission support, access to and recruitment of MonREN members, clinical trial recruitment, and research translation. MonREN is in the final stages of completing a scoping review on the topic of Practice-Based Research Networks and healthcare integration. We aim to publish this in 2026.



## Student Research Support

MonREN supported a variety of student research projects. These included an Honours project, Summer Scholar placement, and supervision of medical student research placements.



## MonREN Research Events and Workshops

MonREN hosted 3 Academic Journal Clubs events to critically discuss primary healthcare research. MonREN also hosted workshops at the annual Australian Association for Academic Primary Care (AAAPC) conference, for Aarhus University, and for national PBRN managers organised by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) – offering practical tools and strategies to support research engagement and translation in primary care.



## Consulting

MonREN provided consulting to local research groups to positively enhance primary health outcomes for the southeast Melbourne community.



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# MonREN Research Services



In 2025, MonREN strengthened its tiered research support model to better assist researchers seeking to engage with general practice. As a Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN), MonREN plays a key translational role – ensuring research conducted in primary care is feasible, practice-relevant, and informed by the realities of frontline general practice.

We encourage early engagement with the Network to improve study design, recruitment strategies and implementation planning. MonREN provides initial research consultation at no cost and offers expertise across the research lifecycle, including grant development and partnership, clinical and general practice insight, recruitment strategy, targeted member outreach, communication support, and dissemination of findings.

Our PBRN model strengthens collaboration between academia and clinicians, reduces research burden on practices, and promotes studies that are more likely to translate into improved patient care.

## Growth in 2025

In 2025, MonREN expanded the reach and sophistication of its research services by:

- Formalising a tiered service structure
- Strengthening grant partnership activity
- Enhancing dissemination through our website and bimonthly e-newsletter
- Supporting a growing portfolio of student projects and funded projects.

MonREN is committed to improving the quality and impact of general practice research. Our focus includes increasing GP involvement in research priority setting, supporting co-design approaches, reducing administrative burden for clinics, and strengthening translation into practice.

Through these efforts, MonREN continues to build a sustainable, practice-informed research ecosystem across Melbourne's east and south-east.

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# Key Achievements



## **Governance**

### ***Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Groups***

MonREN has maintained its Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Groups, comprised of diverse professionals who guide the Network's direction and vision. These groups work to expand MonREN's reach and strengthen the impact of primary healthcare research in the region.

### ***Patient Representative Engagement***

Three patient representatives sit on MonREN's Stakeholder Advisory Group, providing essential perspectives to support collaborative, patient-informed research. MonREN aims to further amplify the patient voice in future research initiatives.

## **Data Management and e-Communications**

### ***Database Management***

MonREN continues to grow and maintain an actively-engaged member database to enhance research participation and outcomes. Ongoing review and streamlining of the database remain a priority.

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## ***eCommunication***

MonREN continued to provide regular communication to our members through research themed e-newsletters, research opportunities and invitations to participate in various projects, and through primary care research news and updates.

## **Education and Academia**

### ***Workshop Presentations***

The MonREN management team delivered the interactive workshop “The Business of Recruiting: Bringing Marketing Science to Practice-Based Research Networks” at the annual Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care (AAAPC) Research Conference in September 2025.

Following its success, Emiko Hunt presented the workshop online to the Research Unit for General Practice at Aarhus University and delivered an abbreviated version at the national PBRN managers meeting organised by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

### ***Journal Clubs***

Throughout the year, MonREN members were invited to attend Academic Journal Clubs to explore specific areas of primary care research and earn CPD points. These sessions were well received and supported engagement and skill development among participants.



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## ***Student Projects***

In 2025, MonREN welcomed Honours student Iris Gu, who partnered with Monash University Health Services for her project. The Network also supported final-year medical students completing short research projects and hosted summer student placements.

## ***Student Supervision***

MonREN provides ongoing supervision and mentorship for medical students and summer students, supporting research in primary care and fostering the next generation of researchers.

## **Partnering with the Local Research Community**

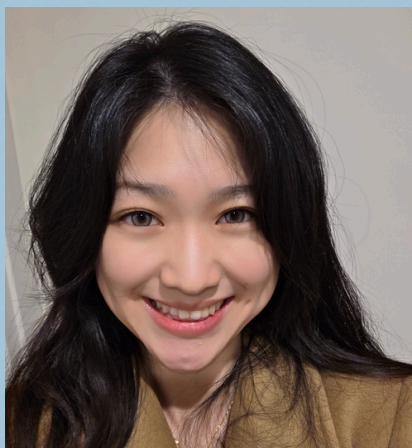
### ***Consulting Services***

MonREN offers consulting services to support research partners and advance excellence in primary healthcare research. In 2025, the Network provided guidance on research grant applications, co-designed projects, clinical trials, translational research, and student research initiatives. Areas of expertise include study design, clinical input, recruitment, promotion, communication, and stakeholder engagement.



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# MonREN Honours Student: Iris Qingxin Gu



“I strongly recommend collaborating with MonREN for anyone interested in general practice research. Their extensive network of GPs enhances research feasibility and relevance. Beyond technical support, MonREN offers a welcoming and supportive environment, which is particularly beneficial for those entering the research field for the first time.”

– *Iris Qingxin Gu, Honours Student 2025*

Biomedical Science Honours student, Iris Qingxin Gu, worked with MonREN on her honours research project, *Patient Preferences for Providing Accessible Treatment to Higher-Education Students (PATHS)*.

Iris’ research examined how a university health service could optimise access to care for students. MonREN played a pivotal role in shaping and supporting the project by:

- Helping to define the research question through engagement with community members and general practitioners, whose insights highlighted gaps in access to healthcare for tertiary students.

- Facilitating access to community groups and general practice stakeholders.
- Providing ongoing guidance, supervision and mentorship throughout the research process.

MonREN’s support provided Iris with valuable experience in stakeholder engagement, practice-based research and knowledge translation. The Network’s involvement strengthened the rigour and relevance of the project, demonstrating MonREN’s critical role in supporting students and early-career researchers and embedding research within real-world primary care settings.

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# Journal Clubs

Hosted throughout the year, MonREN's Academic Journal Club is an engaging and collaborative forum for exploring current general practice research and strengthening critical appraisal skills.

The Journal Club supports a strong research culture in primary care, fosters discussion and collaboration among general practitioners and researchers, and provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours for participating GPs.

The series features leading researchers and clinician-scientists and covers a diverse range of topics, including women's health, emerging technologies and endocrinology. Journal Club sessions delivered this year are outlined below.



*Dr Jagdeesh Singh  
Dhaliwal*

## **“Artificial intelligence education for radiographers, an evaluation of a UK postgraduate educational intervention using participatory action research: a pilot study”**

This Journal Club explored the future of AI upskilling in primary care. Using a participatory action research approach, the study highlighted the need for agile, responsive learning models that keep pace with the rapid evolution of AI.



*Dr Marcus Pensa*

### **“Prevalence and Characteristics of Low-renin Hypertension in a Primary Care Population”**

This Journal Club examined evidence of the high prevalence of low-renin hypertension in primary care, highlighting the condition, emerging treatments, and implications for screening and management of disorders such as primary aldosteronism.



*Dr Nat Lojanapiwat*

### **“A Digital Program for Daily Life Management with Endometriosis: Pilot Cohort Study on Symptoms and Quality of Life Among Participants”**

This Journal Club reviewed a cohort study on a digital health program for endometriosis, strengthening critical appraisal skills and exploring the role of digital health in chronic disease management.

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# Online Workshop: Aarhus University Denmark



MonREN delivered its first international workshop, marking an important milestone in the Network's growth and reach. Presented to the Research Unit for General Practice at Aarhus University, the session focused on improving recruitment of general practices into research.

The workshop introduced practical tools and strategies, including addressing common recruitment challenges, applying marketing insights to better understand and engage target audiences, and using communication design principles to strengthen study outreach. Interactive activities enabled participants to apply these concepts to their own projects.

Feedback was highly positive, with the department highlighting the relevance and value of the session. This collaboration reflects MonREN's expanding international profile and its capacity to translate multidisciplinary expertise into practical support for primary care research.

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# Monash General Practice Student Network Collaboration & Sponsorship

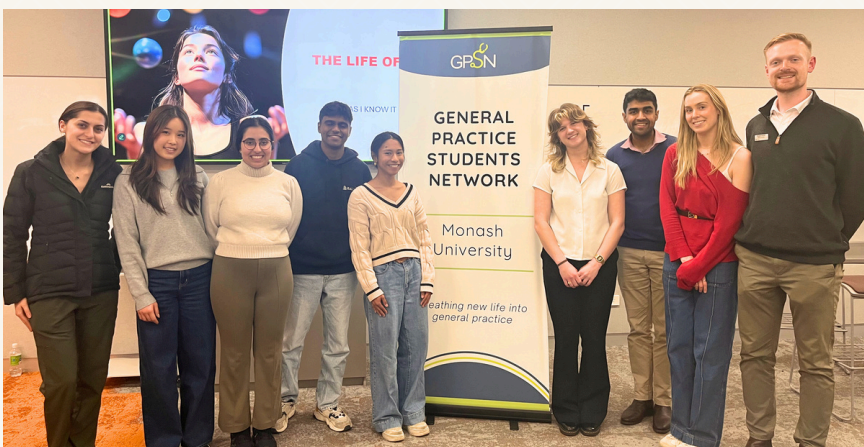
“Research is a key component of many medical specialties, and we believe it is integral to daily work in general practice. We hope to introduce GP-inclined students to the role of research in general practice and believe the partnership with MonREN is vital moving forward.”

*–Isabella Bembic, Monash GPSN Chair 2025*

The Monash General Practice Students Network (GPSN) is a student-led network for those interested in general practice.

Throughout the year, GPSN Monash highlights the diversity and opportunities within general practice through academic resources and in-person revision events.

In 2025, MonREN proudly sponsored GPSN’s General Practitioner Careers Night, providing medical students with an interest in general practice the chance to hear directly from practicing GPs. MonREN congratulates GPSN on a successful event and looks forward to continuing support for the next generation of GPs.



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# MonREN Impact Story:

## ECMO PROMPT



“Engaging with MonREN enhanced the quality of our study materials, supported meaningful engagement with general practitioners, and ensured that the trial design was contextually appropriate for primary care.”

- Curtis Hopkins  
Project manager for ECMO-PROMPT

The ECMO PROMPT trial (A Pilot Feasibility Randomised Controlled Trial) aims to enhance engagement between ECMO survivors and their nominated primary care providers, while increasing awareness and understanding of ECMO among general practitioners.

MonREN supported the ECMO PROMPT trial by:

- Contributing expertise in primary care and community health to ensure study materials were clear, relevant, and feasible.
- Reviewing trial documentation ahead of ethics and governance submissions, ensuring precision and responsiveness.

- Facilitating communication between hospital-based researchers and community-based clinicians.
- Establishing an ongoing partnership with the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Research Centre (ANZIC-RC) to support future collaborative research.

MonREN’s involvement strengthened the trial by ensuring a contextually-appropriate design that included primary care perspectives. MonREN’s guidance provided essential access to primary care expertise and clinician engagement, reflecting MonREN’s professionalism, responsiveness, and commitment to research excellence.

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# 2026 Focuses

## Research Support and Impact

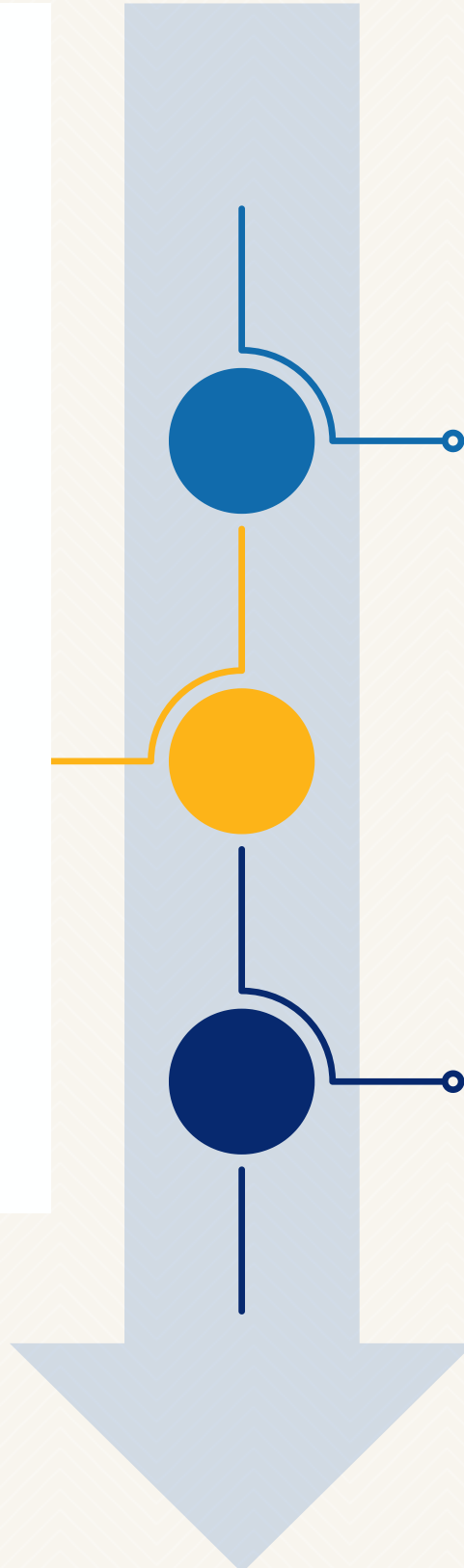
- Increase MonREN-led and MonREN-supported research activity.
- Better engage and support students and early-career researchers.
- Enhance university-wide collaborations to increase primary care research.
- Improve systems for tracking, reporting, and demonstrating MonREN's research impact.

## Stability and Sustainability

- Strengthen long-term funding and sustainability.
- Increase MonREN's visibility and integration.

## Membership Growth and Engagement

- Grow membership across GP staff and students.
- Improve communication, engagement, and research capacity-building.
- Strengthen membership data quality and database management



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# Acknowledgements

## Partners and collaborators



- Monash University Department of General Practice
- South East Melbourne PHN
- Eastern Melbourne PHN
- General Practice Supervision Australia

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## Management team

- Professor Grant Russell
- Associate Professor Chris Barton
- Network Manager, Emiko Hunt



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## Steering Committee

Atish Manek, Chris Barton, Danielle Mazza, Emiko Hunt, Grant Russell, Jennifer Neil, Jordan Crawford, Maria de Leon-Santiago, Monika Coha, Sandra Zovko and Sonia Srinivasan.

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## Stakeholder Advisory Group

Andrea Cooper, Angela Jones, Chris Barton, Emiko Hunt, Grant Russell, Helen Skouteris, Malcolm Clark, Nigel Stocks, Paula Davey, Samantha Chakraborty, Sue Viney and Tess Marotta.

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