

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2025





Department of General Practice

Established in 1975, the Monash University Department of General Practice is a globally recognised medicine, teaching and research department and one of the largest in Australia. The Department continues to strive for excellence in research and teaching in order to improve outcomes for patients through the advancement of general practice.

TRIBUTE TO EMERITUS PROFESSOR JOHN MURTAGH AO, PROFESSOR OF GENERAL PRACTICE, MONASH UNIVERSITY (1936-2025)

Monash University pays tribute to Emeritus Professor John Murtagh AO, a visionary in Australian medicine and one of the most influential educators in General Practice. Professor Murtagh passed away peacefully on October 18, 2025, leaving behind a legacy that transformed medical education and practice both nationally and internationally.

As a foundation graduate of Monash University (1966), Professor Murtagh returned as a senior lecturer in 1976 while running a rural practice in West Gippsland. At a time when General Practice was still gaining recognition in academia, he played a crucial role in integrating it into the curriculum and establishing one of Australia's leading GP training programs. His unwavering belief in the importance of primary care shaped generations of practitioners.

Internationally, he is best known as the author of John Murtagh's General Practice, a textbook that has guided generations of doctors across more than 20 countries. His writing and teaching combined clinical precision with compassion, helping doctors navigate the complexities of diagnosis and care with clarity and empathy.

He received numerous accolades, including the AMA Gold Medal, the David de Kretser Medal, and Monash's Distinguished Alumni Award. Despite these honours, he remained deeply committed to serving rural and underserved communities, where his career began and his heart remained.

Monash University is honoured to have been part of his journey. His values live on in its graduates, and his legacy continues to shape the future of healthcare.

Professor John Murtagh was more than an educator or a physician — he was a mentor who nurtured ethical, confident, and compassionate doctors, a healer whose influence shaped generations, and a giant of Australian medicine.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Our 2025 annual report shares stories and achievements of our department and reflects on our future growth and development.

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WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



It is with both immense pride and profound sadness that I present this year's annual report, reflecting on a year marked by significant milestones, heartfelt tributes, and numerous achievements across our department.

Emeritus Professor John Murtagh AO, often regarded as the "Grandfather of General Practice" sadly passed away in October. We pay tribute to Prof Murtagh, whose extraordinary contributions to general practice and medical education have shaped generations of clinicians and scholars. His enduring legacy will continue to guide and inspire our work.

I am proud to announce that the Vape Free Project Team led by Associate Professor Chris Barton has won the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award for Health, Safety and Wellbeing. This award recognises those who have made an outstanding contribution by implementing innovative and exciting ideas in the area of health, safety and wellbeing at Monash. The team's achievement reflects our department's dedication to creating healthier communities and advancing impactful initiatives. Congratulations also to Dr Jess Botfield, who received the Dean's Excellence Award and was named Early Career Researcher of the Year.

I would also like to congratulate Associate Professor Jennifer Neil, formerly our Curriculum and Assessment Lead, on her promotion to the role of Head of Curriculum at Monash Medical School. Jenny's leadership in student placements and stakeholder engagement has been instrumental to our success, and her promotion is a proud moment for the department. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with her as she leads curriculum innovation across the medical degree.

The department was strongly represented at the AAAPC Annual Research Conference, showcasing the breadth and depth of our research. A particular highlight was Professor Grant Russell receiving the Charles Bridges-Webb Medal, the highest honour awarded by the Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care (AAAPC), in recognition of his lifetime contribution to academic primary care.

A number of our students and staff were recognised in the SPHPM Excellence Awards 2025. Derek Villaceran, Kira Percival-Cobb, Dr Cathy Grech and Dr Jessica Botfield were recognised for their excellence in undergraduate and honours achievement, tutoring, and HDR supervision. These awards reflect the dedication and impact of our team across all levels of education and research.

Further accolades include Dr Nadida Kachkouche who received a nomination in the 2024 Teaching Excellence Awards, and Dr Sharon James and Dr Vera Costa on the successful conclusion of their prestigious Oxford Primary Care Research Fellowships, which have further strengthened our international academic ties.

This year, we celebrated the graduation of three PhD students, marking a significant milestone in their academic careers and demonstrating our commitment to research excellence. Our department continues to grow, with a significant growth in our research student numbers and consistently positive feedback from students about the quality of teaching.

These achievements reflect the dedication, talent, and collaborative spirit that define our department. I extend my sincere thanks to all staff, students, and partners for their continued commitment to excellence in education, research, and clinical care.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Mazza". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Danielle Mazza AM FAHMS

Head of Department of General Practice
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine
Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences
Monash University



Staff and Students of the Department of General Practice, October 2025

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



Prof Danielle Mazza AM FAHMS
Professor of General Practice
and Head of Department



Prof Grant Russell
Professor of Primary Care Research



A/Prof Chris Barton
Research Training Coordinator



Dr Harishan Tharmarajah
Senior Lecturer and Curriculum and
Assessment Lead



Dr Atish Manek
Senior Lecturer



Dr Nadida Kachkouche
Senior Lecturer



Dr Cathy Grech
Senior Lecturer



Ms Sandra Zovko
Senior Clinical Site Administrator



Ms Levina Rahardjo
Executive Assistant to Head
of Department

UPDATING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

The Department of General Practice last conducted a major strategic planning activity in 2017. This plan was updated in February 2020 and expired in 2024. Since then we have achieved significant growth in the department's research and research training programs. Alongside this growth, changes to key personnel in our teaching portfolios have occurred, and so 2025 is a perfect time to revisit the Department's vision and mission to "advance the discipline of general practice".

In November, members of the Department's senior management team will convene for a planning day at Clayton campus to outline our goals and priorities for the next five years. The landscape of general practice and academia continues to evolve and so to must the department. Our strategic planning day will provide an opportunity for us to re-focus, re-invigorate, and re-set the priorities for the department so that we remain at the forefront of academic general practice in Australia and internationally.

EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIPS, COMMITTEES, INVITED/GUEST PRESENTATIONS

Professor Danielle Mazza AM

Memberships/Committees

- Member of the Order of Australia (AM)
- Member, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Senior Management Committee, FMNHS, Monash University
- Member, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Research Committee, FMNHS, Monash University
- Board Member, VicHealth
- Member, Reconciliation Action Plan Committee, VicHealth
- Co-Chair, Access, Care and Outcomes Subcommittee;
- Member, National Women's Health Advisory Council,
- Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government
- Chair, Access to Termination and LARC Subcommittee;
- Member, Women's Health Research Subcommittee;
- Member, Victorian Women's Health Advisory Council,
- Department of Health and Aged Care, Victorian Government
- Member, Therapeutic Goods Administration Women's Health Product Advisory Committee, Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government
- Member, Public Health and Health Systems Committee, NHMRC-MRFF
- Member, NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence assessment panel
- Member, NHMRC Partnership Projects peer review panel
- Member, Endometriosis Advisory Group (EAG), Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government
- Member, Community Pharmacist Statewide Pilot Clinical Reference Group, Safer Care Victoria
- Member, Executive Committee, Victorian Health Research Translation Centre Collaborative
- Member, RACGP Research Expert Committee

- Member, RANZCOG Endometriosis Expert Working Group (Working Party)
- Member, Australian Endometriosis Education Steering Committee, Gideon Richter
- Member, Editorial Board for the Journal of Antibiotics
- Member, Editorial Advisory Board, British Medical Journal Sexual & Reproductive Health
- Board Member, South East Melbourne Primary Health Network

Invited/Guest presentations

- Invited lecture - From Aspiration to Access: Building Equitable High Quality Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Care in Australian Primary Care Settings. Lloyd Cox Memorial Lecture, Robinson Research Institute, The University of Adelaide, November 2025.
- Invited presentation - Navigating the GP PhD experience and career progression post-PhD, GP PhD Network virtual event, RACGP, October 2025.
- Invited presentation - Achieving Better Outcomes in Women's SRH: The SPHERE CRE Journey, Speaking of Science Webinar, NHMRC, September 2025.
- Invited presentation - Life as a clinician researcher: what you always wanted to know but never got told, Life As A Clinician Scientist, The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences, August 2025.
- Invited keynote speaker - Accessible, equitable, high quality women's sexual and reproductive health care: challenges and solutions, Tasmania Reproductive Health Conference, Women's Health Tasmania, May 2025.
- Invited presentation - Compensable Health and Medicine, Insurance Work & Health Group, School of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, May 2025.
- Invited keynote speaker - Keynote address, Symposium on Abortion, Department of Health, April 2025.
- Invited presentation - Monash Partners Women's Health Theme Research Showcase, November 2024.

Chris Barton

Memberships/Committees

- Convener, Primary Care Special Interest Group, Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand.
- Member, Conference Steering Committee - 2026 TSANZ Annual Scientific Meeting
- Member, Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care

Grant Review Panels

- National Institute of Health Research (UK and NHMRC), Aust-UK Platform Studies.
- External Panel Member - South East Melbourne Primary Health Network, General Practice Multidisciplinary Teams Tender
- Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science, Early Career Researchers publication prize

Invited Workshop contributions

- TSANZ pre-conference postgraduate workshop 2025 - Identifying and Treating Nicotine Addiction - Primary Care perspectives
- TSANZ pre-conference postgraduate workshop 2025 - Stigma, Smoking and Lung Cancer

Dr Harishan Tharmarajah

Memberships/Committees

- Member, Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHPE)
- Chair, General Practice Site Leads Committee, Monash Medical School
- Chair, Department of General Practice Education Committee
- School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine Education Committee
- Medical Education and Curriculum Committee, Monash Medical School
- Year 4C Assessment Working Group

Curriculum Reviewer

- RACGP Curriculum and Syllabus Reviewer - Men's health (7th Edition)

Prof Grant Russell

External Memberships

- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Australian Medical Association
- Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care.
- North American Primary Care Research Group
- World Association of Family Doctors

Committees

- Academic Lead MonREN Practice Based Research Network
- Chair Editorial Advisory Committee, Australian Journal of General Practice, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Chair Primary Care Platform Monash Partners Academic Health Science Centre
- Chair Academic Policy and Advocacy Committee Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care
- Member Executive Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care
- Member Leadership Committee Victorian Collaboration for Translating Research Outcomes into the Primary Health Interface
- Mentor: SPHPM Mentor Program
- Member SPHPM Data Committee.
- Member Grant assessment panel: National Health and Medical Research Council investigator Grants 2025
- Member World Association of Family Doctors. Interim Governance Body of the Global PBRN Initiative
- Adjunct Professor, Department of Family Medicine, University of Ottawa
- Family Practitioner / General Practitioner Sandringham Family Medical Centre (Sandringham, Melbourne, Victoria)

Invited Presentations/contributions

- Research involving vulnerable people and communities Academic Post 2025 Mid-Term Workshop Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Primary care in Australia and beyond. Asian Medical Students' Exchange Programme, Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. August 4 2025
- General Practice Innovation Grants Co-design Workshop. Victorian Department of Health, 27 November 2024
- Consultant: SEMHSP Strengthening Partner Connections Project South-East Metro Health Service Partnership (SEMHSP) and the South-Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network
- Consultant: Bridging Research and Quality Activities in Health Summit. Monash Partners 10 Feb 2025
- Consultant. Connected Care: Living Lab Workshop Monash Health 15th of July 2025

Dr Anisa Assifi

Membership/Committees

- AAAPC - Executive Committee Treasurer
- Public Health Association Australia - Women's Health Special Interest Group
- Membership Australian Association of Adolescent Health
- SPHPM EMCR Committee
- DGP Academic Seminar Committee
- DGP Research Committee

Dr Jessica Botfield

Membership/Committees

- Founder and Chair, Postpartum Contraception Network
- Member, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine EMCR Committee, Monash University
- Chair, Early and Mid Career Academic (EMCA) Subcommittee, Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care
- Member, RACGP National Research and Evaluation Ethics Committee
- Associate Editor, Australian Journal of Primary Health
- Editorial Board Member, Culture, Health & Sexuality
- Editorial Board Member, Contraception and Reproductive Medicine

Dr Karen Nolidin

Memberships/Committees

- Editor, Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care
- Member, Executive Committee, Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care
- Member, Membership Engagement Sub-committee, Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care

Sharon James

Memberships/Committees

- The International Core Indicators for Preconception Health and Equity (iCIPHE) Alliance Core Working Group
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, Member and Board Director
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, member of the Governance, Nominations, and Florence CPD subcommittees
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, Expert Nurse Panel
- National Hypertension Taskforce Steering Committee member
- Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care member, Policy and Advocacy
- Subcommittee member, Early-Mid Career Researcher Subcommittee member
- Sigma Nursing Xi Omicron Chapter-at-Large Board member and Primary Health Care Chapter Lead
- Monash University Department of General Practice Research Committee

Grant Reviewer

- The Australian General Practice Research Grants

Invited/Guest presentations

- University of Southampton Lifecourse Epidemiology Centre and Primary Care Departments and the UK preconception partnership about "Opportunities to support interconception health in primary care".

Dr Vera Camões Costa

Memberships/Committees

- Executive Member (Secretariat), Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care (AAAPC)
- Member, AAAPC Early and Mid Career Academics Committee
- Fellow of the International Primary Care Research Leadership Programme, The University of Oxford
- Member, Primary care Endometriosis and Adenomyosis Research and Learning (PEARL) network
- Member, EQUitable Implementation research and Practice (EQUIP) network
- Member, Women's Health Research Translation & Impact Network (WHRTN)
- Invited/Guest presentations
- Invited presentation – 'Contraceptive Inequities: Insights from the 2024 Australian Women's Health Survey', SocioDigital Lab for Public Policy, University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal.

STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION



Dr Jessica Botfield:

- Dean’s Award for Excellence for Early Career Researcher of the Year (To be announced October 2025)
 - > To reward excellence by early career researchers who have achieved, or are currently achieving, exceptional research excellence and impact.
- School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Early Career Research Excellence 2024
 - > In recognition of outstanding contribution to research by an Early Career Researcher in the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine in 2024.

“I’m incredibly honoured to have received both the Faculty and School’s ECR research excellence awards this year. I am so grateful for the teams I work in, and for my colleagues, supervisors and mentors, and for the wonderful and supportive research community I’m part of” - Dr Jessica Botfield.



A/Prof Chris Barton, Isabella Papadopoulos, Melis Selamoglu and Sanduni Madawala.

- Vice Chancellors Award for Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
 - > Awarded in recognition of the Amplifying “UNCLOUD” health promotion campaign led by the Department of General Practice in collaboration with partners from across the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, the University Health Services, and South East Public Health Unit. This work, funded by VicHealth, involved a coordinated and integrated suite of activities to increase the awareness of the harms of vaping and increase community capability to address vaping among young adults.



Cathy Grech

SPHPM Education Excellence in Tutoring Award



Kira Percival-Cobb

SPHPM Health Science Honours Excellence Award

Dr Sharon James

- 2025 Emerging Nurse Researcher/Scholar Award (Oceania) from the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing

“I am thrilled to receive this prestigious award. It highlights the possibilities for rural clinician researchers to have this recognition. Just being nominated means that your colleagues believe in your work and leadership.” - Dr Sharon James



Prof Grant Russell

- 2025 Charles Bridges-Webb Medal by the Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care.

“The medal, presented at AAAPC’s annual scientific meeting, is the most prestigious award of the AAAPC. The medal is awarded to a member of AAAPC in recognition of an outstanding and continuing career in academic primary care.” - Prof Grant Russell

PARTICIPATION IN THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH

LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Authors: Dr Vera Camões-Costa and Dr Sharon James

In September this year Dr Sharon James and Dr Vera Camões-Costa took part in the Oxford International Primary Care Leadership programme, held within the picturesque and historic Harris-Manchester College, Oxford University. The College has been at Oxford University since the late 19th Century and is a vibrant and inclusive place to visit, stay and work. These lovely surroundings were perfect for the stimulating and inclusive Oxford International Primary Care Leadership Programme.

As members of Cohort 16, they attended a second residency week alongside international primary care academics and colleagues from previous cohorts. In addition to strengthening professional relationships within our cohort, we also had the opportunity to meet, connect with and learn from a broader academic network. This fostered an exchange of knowledge, potential for future collaboration and opportunities for mentorship. The schedule for the week, included presentations and workshops by external leaders in the field of coaching, psychology, primary care, and leadership and management, as well as a range of social and reflective activities. At the end of the week, we left Oxford feeling energised and eager to pursue our goals in improving primary care nationally and internationally.

Applications to the three-year Oxford International Primary Care Leadership Programme are open to post-doctoral researchers who aspire to develop as leaders; keen to explore different aspects of leadership in primary care research and to develop a higher level of strategic operational skills. Sharon and Vera would highly recommend this Programme to future primary care research leaders.



L-R: Dr Taeko Begue (University of Southampton), Dr Vera Camões-Costa (Monash University), Dr Helen Ashdown (University of Oxford), Dr Sharon James (Monash University), Dr Caroline McCarthy (Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland), Dr Helen Twohig (Keele University), Dr Kelly Howells (University of Manchester), Dr Raphael Kunisch (Universitat Augsburg).

Harris-Manchester College, University of Oxford



ADVANCING WOMEN'S SUCCESS GRANT 2025

Dr Vera Camões-Costa was awarded the 2025 Advancing Women's Success Grant from Monash University. This prestigious grant supported her participation in the Oxford International Primary Care Research Leadership Programme's residency week (where she is a current Fellow), and enabled her to engage with international investigators to foster meaningful collaborations that advance her research career.

During the Oxford residency, Vera reconnected with her cohort—comprising eight primary care researchers from Ireland, Germany, Great Britain, and Australia—and engaged with members of the programme *Alumni* from across the globe who joined the current cohorts. These interactions significantly expanded her international network, strengthening opportunities for mentorship and future collaboration.

In Lisbon, Vera met with Dr Ana Gama and A/Prof Marta Marques at the National School of Public Health (NSPH NOVA). Their shared interests in psychosocial health, equity, and culturally responsive care, particularly through a community health psychology lens, shape Vera's thinking around her future research program involving participatory research with priority populations.



L-R: Dr Vera Camões-Costa (Monash University), Dr Raphael Kunisch (Universität Augsburg), Prof Sabrina Kastaun (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf), A/Prof Barbara Iyen (University of Nottingham)

During her visit to Lisbon, Vera also delivered a seminar at the SocioDigital Lab for Public Policy titled 'Uncovering Contraceptive Inequities: Insights from the 2024 Australian Women's Health Survey'. The session sparked rich interdisciplinary dialogue among academics working on people-centred policy solutions across psychology, sociology, and public health, laying the groundwork for future collaborations in designing culturally responsive and socially attuned policy-relevant health innovations.

At the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Vera met with A/Prof Rebecca French and Dr Rose Stevens to discuss methodologies for analysing national data on contraceptive discontinuation. Together, they explored comparative trends between Australia and the UK and identified opportunities for a joint publication.

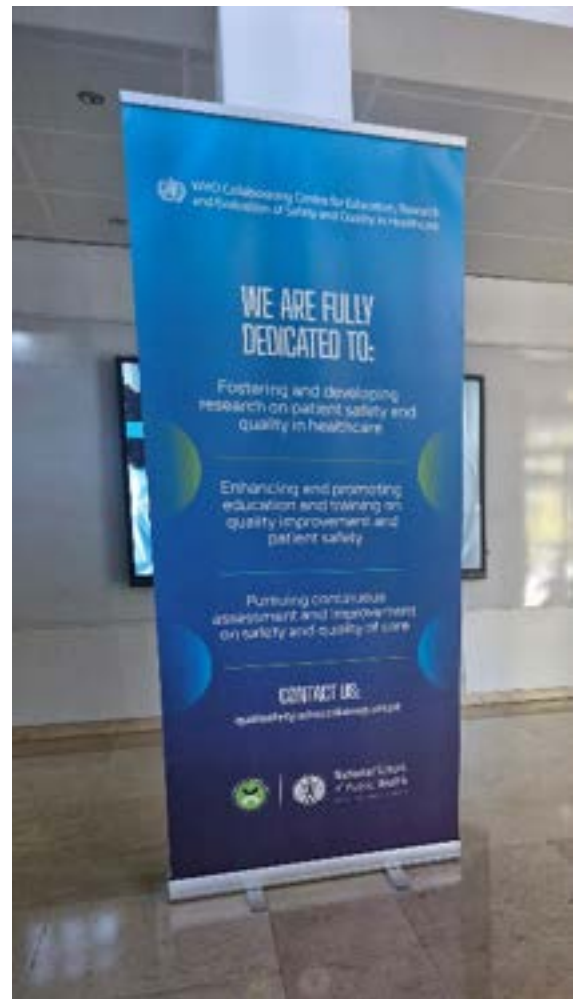
Finally, Vera met with A/Prof Abimbola Ayorinde and Dr Aishah Ibrahim at Warwick Medical School to plan the re-submission of a joint application to the Monash Warwick Alliance Research Activation Fund. The proposed project aims to co-design behavioural strategies that support informed choice and uptake of effective contraception among young women from East and South Asian backgrounds.



L-R: Dr Vera Camões-Costa (Monash University), A/Prof Rebecca French (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Dr Rose Stevens (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)



L-R: A/Prof Abimbola Ayorinde (Warwick Medical School), Dr Aishah Ibrahim (Warwick Medical School), Dr Vera Camões-Costa (Monash University)



Entrance of the National School of Public Health, Lisbon.

SCHOLARSHIPS, STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS, GRANTS AND FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

Sangita Chakraborty TROPHI PhD Bursary.



TROPHI is a collaboration that bridges the gap between research and healthcare delivery, bringing primary care research to life. It is a collaboration between the Monash University Department of General Practice, The University of Melbourne Department of General Practice and the RACGP, funded by the Windermere Foundation.

I have received a \$10,000 bursary to explore the lived experiences, cultural beliefs, and unmet needs of South Asian women living with endometriosis in Australia, examining how cultural values, norms, and health system interactions shape their experiences of symptoms, diagnosis, and care. It also seeks to understand general practitioners' perspectives on the challenges, barriers, and strategies involved in supporting South Asian women with endometriosis, including their informational and resource needs.

"I am extremely grateful to TROPHI for this opportunity as this will provide a voice to culturally and linguistically diverse women whose experiences with endometriosis are often overlooked, and to understand how culture shapes their journey through pain, diagnosis, and care. My hope is that by listening to both women and GPs, we can build a more culturally responsive and compassionate model of endometriosis care in Australia." - Ms Sangita Chakraborty

Dr Alissia Hui TROPHI research bursary



In October 2025 I was awarded a Victorian Collaboration for Translating Research Outcomes in the Primary Health interface (TROPHI) research bursary to support translational research and training.

The TROPHI team would like to give thanks to the Windermere Foundation for their generous funding and vision to support the TROPHI project. This bursary is available to early career researchers who are GPs and aims to:

- increase the numbers of practitioners educated about and participating in research within of the Outer Eastern Melbourne community and
- ignite recipient's interest in becoming more involved in research and translation in other ways within their training or later career.

This bursary will provide \$5,000 of project funding for my PhD qualitative interview study, where I will explore the experiences of GPs and people with lived experience of endometriosis in recommending, delivering and using hormonal treatments including long-acting reversible contraception for endometriosis in Australian primary care.

"I am thrilled to have received this essential funding for my qualitative study. The bursary will support participant recruitment, data collection and the dissemination of findings for this study, which forms a critical step in my PhD. It is also wonderful to have been welcomed into the TROPHI team!" - Dr Alissia Hui

Small grants

Dr Sharinne Crawford: SPHERE CRE Professional Development grant. 2025: \$1000.

Dr Nadia Lusic: SPHERE CRE Professional Development grant. 2025: \$1000.

Dr Jessica Botfield: SPHERE CRE Professional Development grant. 2025: \$900.

Dr Vera Camões-Costa: SPHERE CRE Professional Development grant. 2025: \$800.



PARTICIPATION IN TUTOR-PHC (TRANSDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING AND TRAINING ON RESEARCH - PRIMARY HEALTH CARE)

Authors: Ms Susan Saldanha

In 2025, I was honoured to be awarded the Department of General Practice scholarship to participate in the TUTOR-PHC program, hosted by Western University in Canada. TUTOR-PHC is an internationally renowned, year-long capacity-building fellowship that brings together Canadian and international trainees each year from disciplines such as medicine, nursing, public health, epidemiology, psychology, and social sciences. The program’s goal is to strengthen interdisciplinary research and leadership in primary health care, with a strong focus on patient and community engagement.

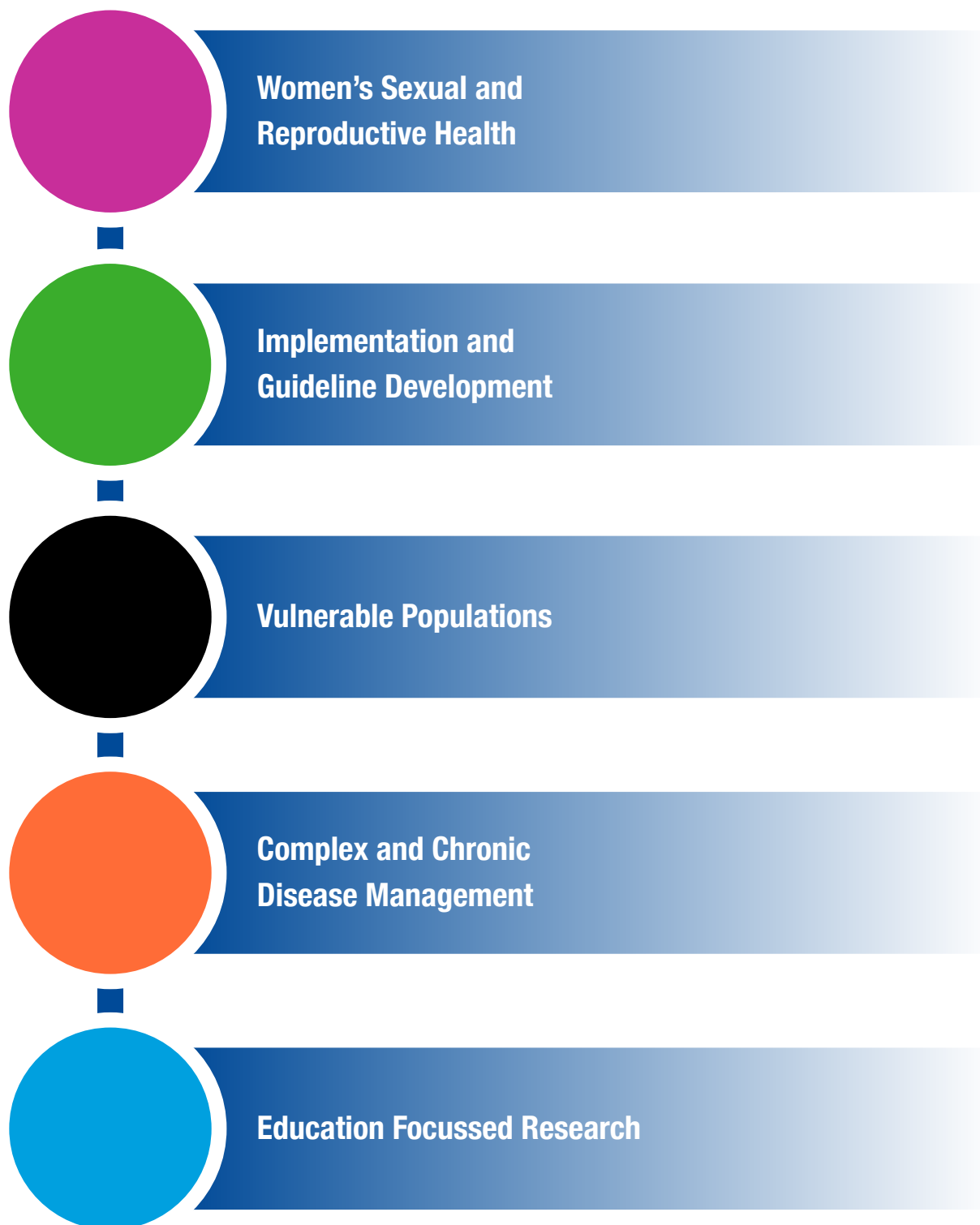
The program began with an intensive four-day in-person symposium in Toronto (April 28 May 1, 2025), where I met an inspiring cohort of eighteen trainees from across Canada, UK, Brazil, and New Zealand. It was an energising experience, full of lively discussions, team activities, and workshops on topics such as patient engagement in research, mixed-methods research, knowledge mobilisation, and grant development. The symposium created a strong sense of collegiality and reminded me how creativity and generosity thrive when researchers from different disciplines come together with shared purpose.

The online components that followed have been equally rewarding. Through facilitated discussion groups and collaborative grant-writing exercises, I have had the opportunity to reflect on how interdisciplinary approaches can enrich reproductive health and gender-based violence research, which is central to my program of work.

Personally, the TUTOR-PHC experience has been transformative. It has deepened my confidence in communicating across disciplines, expanded my international research network, and challenged me to think more boldly about collaboration and impact in primary care research. I am deeply grateful to the Department for supporting my participation in this program.



AREAS OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE



● WOMENS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Authors: Ms Anna Goldstein, Ms Claudia Morando-Stokoe and SPHERE research fellows









The SPHERE Centre for Research Excellence in Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care again led the way in advancing sexual and reproductive health for Australian women through primary care in 2025.

SPHERE delivered a remarkable year based on research excellence, sector-wide innovation, and meaningful impact. Our landmark studies influence national policy and clinical practice, and are recognised across the world.

2025 marked the second year of SPHERE 2.0, a five-year initiative funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council. More than 50 dedicated researchers and support staff, based in Australia and internationally, contribute their exceptional skills and insights to an outstanding multidisciplinary program.

As we look to the future, SPHERE is poised to expand its reach and deepen its impact, driven by the same energy, curiosity, and commitment that defined this remarkable year.

SPHERE 2025 Highlights	
 <p>Federal women’s health package Drawing on SPHERE’s research, the SPHERE Coalition contributed to an invaluable set of initiatives announced in the Federal Government’s \$573 million Women’s Health Package in February 2025. Read more in the SPHERE Coalition report overleaf.</p>	<p>Webinars and visiting scholars A series of high-profile webinars by esteemed visiting international scholars, reinforced SPHERE’s role in thought leadership and knowledge exchange.</p> 
 <p>Equity-focused projects SPHERE’s commitment to equity remained central. Projects addressing adolescent contraceptive access and stigma, and an enhanced role for midwives in postpartum care were among issues spotlighted in national media.</p>	<p>Project updates Two SPHERE projects, ORIENT and ALLIANCE are nearing completion while the Endo MP and the AusCAPPs Network go from strength to strength. We launched a new project this year, How Far is Too Far, and two new initiatives, the Postpartum Contraception Network and the SxRx Collective.</p> 
 <p>Prato conference 2025 World-leading researchers and clinical experts from ten leading global universities and research institutes presented groundbreaking research to shape the future of women’s sexual and reproductive health policy and practice during an international gathering at Monash University’s Prato campus in Italy in August 2025. Read more in the SPHERE report overleaf.</p>	<p>Endometriosis care SPHERE’s research revealed improved diagnostic timelines for endometriosis, a condition affecting one in nine Australian women. This research and the work of our endometriosis team is shaping new clinical pathways and empowering GPs with better tools for early intervention.</p> 





SPHERE COALITION

The SPHERE Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health Coalition is a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary alliance of more than 245 clinician experts, consumers, representatives from peak bodies, stakeholder organisations and leading researchers. Members share a vision of advancing equitable sexual and reproductive healthcare in Australia and using the highest quality evidence to address current and emerging policy issues at state and national levels.

Federal advocacy achievements

In February 2025, the Federal Government’s \$573 million Women’s Health Package reflected key advocacy championed by the Coalition in its response to the Senate Inquiry into Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare.

Key policy wins

	Permanent telehealth Medicare items for sexual and reproductive health services.		A 150% increase in rebates for IUD and implant insertions, making contraception no-cost for many women.
	New 60-minute Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers to support nurse practitioners providing abortion care.		Investment in training scholarships and Centres of Training Excellence to expand LARC access in rural and regional Australia.

Legislative action

The Coalition also supported the NSW Abortion Law Reform Amendment (Health Care Access) Bill 2025, issuing a statement reinforcing that abortion must be recognised as Category 1 essential health care, that public hospitals should be mandated to provide both medical and surgical abortion, and that referral pathways must ensure genuine choice of care.

Digital advocacy

The Coalition developed a consensus statement on Google’s advertising restrictions, highlighting that costly US certification requirements and blanket bans on terms, such as mifepristone and misoprostol, obstruct Australian women’s access to accurate information. The statement called for exemptions for Australian providers, caps on advertising fees, and alignment with Australian regulatory standards.

System improvements

Coalition members contributed to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s new monitoring framework, shaping how abortion, miscarriage, and contraception data will be collected and reported nationally. Further achievements included supporting Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme listings of Slinda (progestogen-only pill) and Estrogel (menopause therapy); backing submissions to the Therapeutic Goods Administration to extend mifepristone use to 70 days and for miscarriage care; forming a working group with HealthDirect to improve post-medication abortion triage; and calling on the Pharmacy Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia to ensure timely supply of generic misoprostol. The Coalition also co-signed a joint election statement with more than 40 organisations, calling for bipartisan support for abortion access.

Through these achievements, the SPHERE Coalition continues to turn evidence into action, securing reforms that make timely, affordable, and equitable sexual and reproductive healthcare a reality for more women in Australia.



SPHERE STUDY MARKS BREAKTHROUGH IN REDUCING UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES IN AUSTRALIA

An important follow-up study, published in April 2025, is driving major progress to address Australia's low uptake of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) and persistently high rates of unintended pregnancies.

The Australian Contraceptive Choice pProject: increasing the uptake of long-acting reversible contraception in general practice (ACCORd) trial

The ACCORd trial aimed to improve contraceptive counselling in general practice by training GPs in contraceptive counselling and providing them with a rapid pathway to a LARC inserter. Results from the initial trial, published in 2020 and involving 57 GPs and 740 women, demonstrated a much higher rate of LARC uptake amongst women whose GPs had been trained in the intervention.

The ACCORd follow-up study, published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology in April 2025, revisited participants three years later.

Key findings

Of those original trial participants, 75% took part in the follow-up study. Results showed a 66% continuation rate for LARC methods, significantly higher than the 55% for non-LARC options. Women who consulted with trained GPs were more likely to continue using LARCs (41%) compared to those who received standard care (28%).

Importantly, the study found that women in the intervention group experienced fewer unintended pregnancies (3.1% vs. 6.3%) and fewer abortions (0.9% vs. 3.6%), compared to women who received regular advice. Satisfaction levels were also higher among LARC users compared to those using the oral contraceptive pill.

Implications and impact

Professor Danielle Mazza, Head of Monash's Department of General Practice and SPHERE Director, said the findings have far-reaching implications. "GP training and rapid referral pathways for LARC insertion have a sustained impact on contraceptive use and significantly reduce unintended pregnancies and abortion," she said.

The ACCORd study informed the Federal Government's package of women's health initiatives announced in February 2025, including new LARC training centres of excellence, financial incentives for GPs, and subsidies to improve access for women across Australia.



PRATO 2025: ADVANCING GLOBAL COLLABORATION IN WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

SPHERE hosted an international roundtable at the Monash University Prato Centre in Prato, Italy over four days in mid-2025.

An international roundtable

The roundtable was focussed on grand challenges in the international landscape for women's sexual and reproductive health. The gathering brought together leading researchers, clinicians, and policy experts to address pressing challenges in women's sexual and reproductive health.

Attendees tackled critical issues including abortion access, contraceptive counselling, preconception and postpartum care, pain management, and equity in service delivery.

The four-day event focused on:

Insights and innovations



Clinical evidence gaps in women's sexual and reproductive health



Innovations to improve access to women's sexual and reproductive health care



Achieving equity - regional perspectives on unmet needs in women's sexual and reproductive health



Achieving knowledge translation into policy and practice in the current context

“

Joining the SPHERE Prato conference was a wonderful and hugely productive experience - being able to share and generate new ideas to improve the sexual and reproductive health of people around the world with our international colleagues in such a beautiful setting was a privilege I will never forget.

- Professor Deborah Bateson AM

”

“

The Prato meeting was one of the most fulfilling and effective meetings I have attended for blue-sky thinking and developing a research agenda in sexual and reproductive health, with a global focus. The opportunity to have formal and informal discussions with leaders across the field was highly valuable and the Prato campus was an enriching and welcoming setting.

*- Dr John Reynolds-Wright,
University of Edinburgh*

”

Discussions highlighted persistent gaps in data, workforce challenges, fragmented care systems, and the influence of misinformation, particularly on younger populations and marginalised groups. Presenters shared insights from major studies and trials, including innovations in telemedicine, pharmacy-led care and AI-enabled support tools.

A recurring theme was the need for inclusive, patient-centred approaches that reflect lived experiences and cultural contexts. Experts called for systemic reform in clinical training, guideline development, and public health strategies, emphasising the importance of

co-design, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainable funding models.

The event also underscored the urgency of integrating sexual and reproductive health services across life stages and sectors, from education and housing to digital health and policy.

Global insights and action planning

The Synergy Session marked a pivotal moment of the Prato 2025 roundtable, bringing together global experts in women’s sexual and reproductive health to reflect on shared challenges and identify strategic opportunities for future collaboration. The session was designed to harness and translate the important discussions from the preceding days into actionable research and policy directions. Key themes included the fragility of funding, workforce capacity, data standardisation, and the importance of patient-centred approaches.

The session also reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, highlighting the role of academic institutions in convening stakeholders and influencing policy, and underscored the urgency of addressing systemic barriers through innovative, evidence-based solutions.

Prato 2025 reinforced SPHERE’s commitment to global collaboration, equity, and evidence-based innovation in women’s sexual and reproductive health. The event catalysed new partnerships and set a forward-looking agenda for international, collaborative research, policy, and practice.



QUALITY FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES AND REFERRALS IN COMMUNITY PHARMACY: EXPANDING PHARMACISTS' SCOPE OF PRACTICE (ALLIANCE) TRIAL.



The Quality Family Planning Services and Referrals in Community Pharmacy: Expanding Pharmacists' Scope of Practice (ALLIANCE) trial is reshaping how reproductive healthcare is delivered in Australian primary care. The ALLIANCE trial explores whether a pharmacy-based intervention can increase the uptake of effective contraception, such as hormonal or intrauterine methods, among women seeking emergency contraception pills (ECP) or medication abortion (MA).

This stepped wedge pragmatic cluster randomised trial conducted across community pharmacies in New South Wales and Victoria, ALLIANCE is looking at whether pharmacists, as accessible and trusted healthcare professionals, can play a pivotal role in improving timely access to effective contraceptive information and methods.

2025 updates

2025 was a defining year for the trial. Data collection for both primary outcomes and process evaluation was completed, including 12-month surveys with women participants and in-depth interviews with trial pharmacists and recipients of the intervention. These insights are important to understanding not just what works, but how and why it works in real-world pharmacy settings.

Collaborative review and next steps

In November, the ALLIANCE investigator team came together in person to review preliminary findings, an energising moment for the project, enriched by Professor Sharon Cameron joining us in person all the way from the University of Edinburgh. The trial is now entering its final phase, with the dissemination of results and completion in June 2026.



Trial implications

The ALLIANCE trial is generating important evidence on expanding pharmacists' scope of practice and how community pharmacists can contribute to more accessible and timely reproductive healthcare. Its findings will inform future policy and practice, supporting efforts to strengthen service delivery and improve outcomes for women across Australia.

Farewells

This year also marked the departure of two valued team members. Elizabeth Lehman, Project Officer since 2023, was instrumental in supporting implementation and building strong relationships with pharmacy partners and participants. Isabella Papadopoulos, Research Fellow since 2024, made key contributions to the trial's process evaluation. Their dedication and expertise have left a lasting impact.

IMPROVING RURAL AND REGIONAL ACCESS TO LONG-ACTING REVERSIBLE CONTRACEPTION AND MEDICAL ABORTION THROUGH NURSE-LED MODELS OF CARE, TASKSHARING AND TELEHEALTH (ORIENT).



The ORIENT trial is a national stepped-wedge pragmatic cluster-randomised controlled trial. The primary aim of the trial is to assess the effectiveness of a nurse-led model of care in general practice at increasing uptake of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and improving access to medical abortion in rural and regional areas of Australia.

2025 updates

The trial is nearing completion, with all practices having now received the implementation support activities to implement the nurse-led model of care (the intervention).

Data analysis

Data analysis for the primary and secondary outcomes is currently underway to investigate changes in the rate of LARC and medical abortion prescribing comparing control and intervention phases.

Economic evaluation

We are also conducting an economic analysis to determine the relative costs and benefits of the model on the prescribing rates of LARC and medical abortion compared with usual care and a realist evaluation to provide contextual information regarding model implementation to inform considerations for scale-up.



HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

The How Far is Too Far project is creating an evidence base to support safe provision of medication abortion for people living far from emergency services.

This project asks the question 'How far from emergency services can first trimester medication abortion be safely provided?', a critical gap in abortion guidelines worldwide.

Study design

Following a concurrent mixed methods study design, the How Far is Too Far study aims to evaluate case-control data from women with and without a hemorrhage post-abortion as well as qualitative data from health care professionals and women living in remote areas with a history of abortion.

2025 updates

We are currently in the data collection phase where qualitative interviews are being conducted with remote women and health care professionals, to investigate their experiences of abortion care.

THE ENDOMETRIOSIS MANAGEMENT PLAN PROJECT



The Endometriosis Management Plan project is a three-year initiative (2023–2026) that will develop and implement an Endometriosis Management Plan (EMP) to support healthcare providers and patients in navigating and managing endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain within primary care settings. The project is being delivered in three phases, and we are currently in Phase Three, focusing on implementation, pilot testing, and evaluation.

In June 2025, we launched a six-month pilot of the EMP across eight medical clinics located in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, and Western Australia. These clinics are testing the usability, feasibility, and effectiveness of the EMP in real-world settings. As the pilot progresses, our team is actively preparing for the evaluation of the EMP pilot program, which will inform the refinement of the EMP ahead of its national rollout in June 2026.

Evaluation activities will continue until the end of 2025 and include regular feedback from participating clinics, in-depth interviews with general practitioners and patients to explore their experiences using the EMP, and a clinician survey to assess changes in knowledge and practice related to RANZCOG Australian Living Evidence Guidelines for Endometriosis.

In 2026, we will complete analysis of all evaluation data. The insights gained will be used to refine the EMP, ensuring it is practical, evidence-informed, and responsive to the needs of both providers and patients. This will support a successful national implementation and contribute to improved endometriosis care across Australia.



POST-PREGNANCY CONTRACEPTION NETWORK

The Post-Pregnancy Contraception Network was established in mid-2025 by Dr Jessica Botfield, with its inaugural meeting held in September.

Already approaching 80 members, the Network comprises researchers, clinicians, public health, and other professionals who are working in or have interests in research, clinical practice and/or policy relating to access to postpartum contraception care as well as consumers with lived experience of postpartum care. The Network currently has members from Australia, Sweden and the UK.

The vision of the Post-Pregnancy Contraception Network is that all women, pregnant people, people who have given birth, and partners have access to high-quality evidence-based contraception information and services to support informed decision-making, pregnancy planning and preparation, and healthy birth spacing.

The Post-Pregnancy Contraception Network meets online several times a year, with additional communication and activities as needed. I would add a link to the registration form, same for SxRx



THE AUSCAPPS NETWORK



The Australian Contraception and Abortion Primary Care Practitioner Support (AusCAPPS) Network is a national online community of practice supporting GPs, nurses, midwives, and community pharmacists to deliver long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and medical abortion (MA) care. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, AusCAPPS works to improve access to women's sexual and reproductive healthcare by fostering peer support, providing expert guidance, promoting training, and sharing evidence-based resources.

Key achievements this year include:

- Continued membership growth - over 3,000 registered health practitioners across Australia.
- Maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders in women's health and primary care, as well as new partnerships with the Australian College of Midwives, Australian College of Nurse Practitioners, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, General Practice Supervision Australia (GPSA), and Sexual and Reproductive Health Australia and state family planning organisations.
- Expansion of clinical topics, including the management of endometriosis with LARC.
- Collaboration with GPSA to develop resources for GP supervisors to support GPs-in-training to become LARC and MA providers.
- The publication of three papers about clinician needs and AusCAPPS network engagement and practice nurse knowledge, attitudes, and practices on LARC and MA.



These collaborations strengthen the support for nurses and midwives to work to their full scope of practice in providing LARC and MA in primary care. AusCAPPS also supports new GPs and rural and remote practitioners, helping to improve equitable access to essential sexual and reproductive health services for women and people assigned female at birth across Australia.

SXR Collective



SxRx Collective is a new network aimed at advancing sexual and reproductive health innovation for all in Australia. Its mission is to build a collaborative platform that strengthens cross-sector partnerships and accelerates inclusive, evidence-based innovation.

The Collective brings together a diverse group of stakeholders, including researchers, clinicians, consumers, startups, industry leaders, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and policymakers. It will drive inclusive, evidence-based innovations that improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes and expand access to services, information, and care.

The first SxRx Collective meeting is planned for late 2025, and its inaugural output - a FemTech Landscape Map - is currently in development. Future activities will include quarterly meetings, thematic working groups, matchmaking events, webinars, and a newsletter to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange.

● IMPLEMENTATION AND GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT

THE MAGPIE STUDY

Authors: Dr Karen Nolidin, Dr Nadia Lusic, Dr Sonia Srinivasan

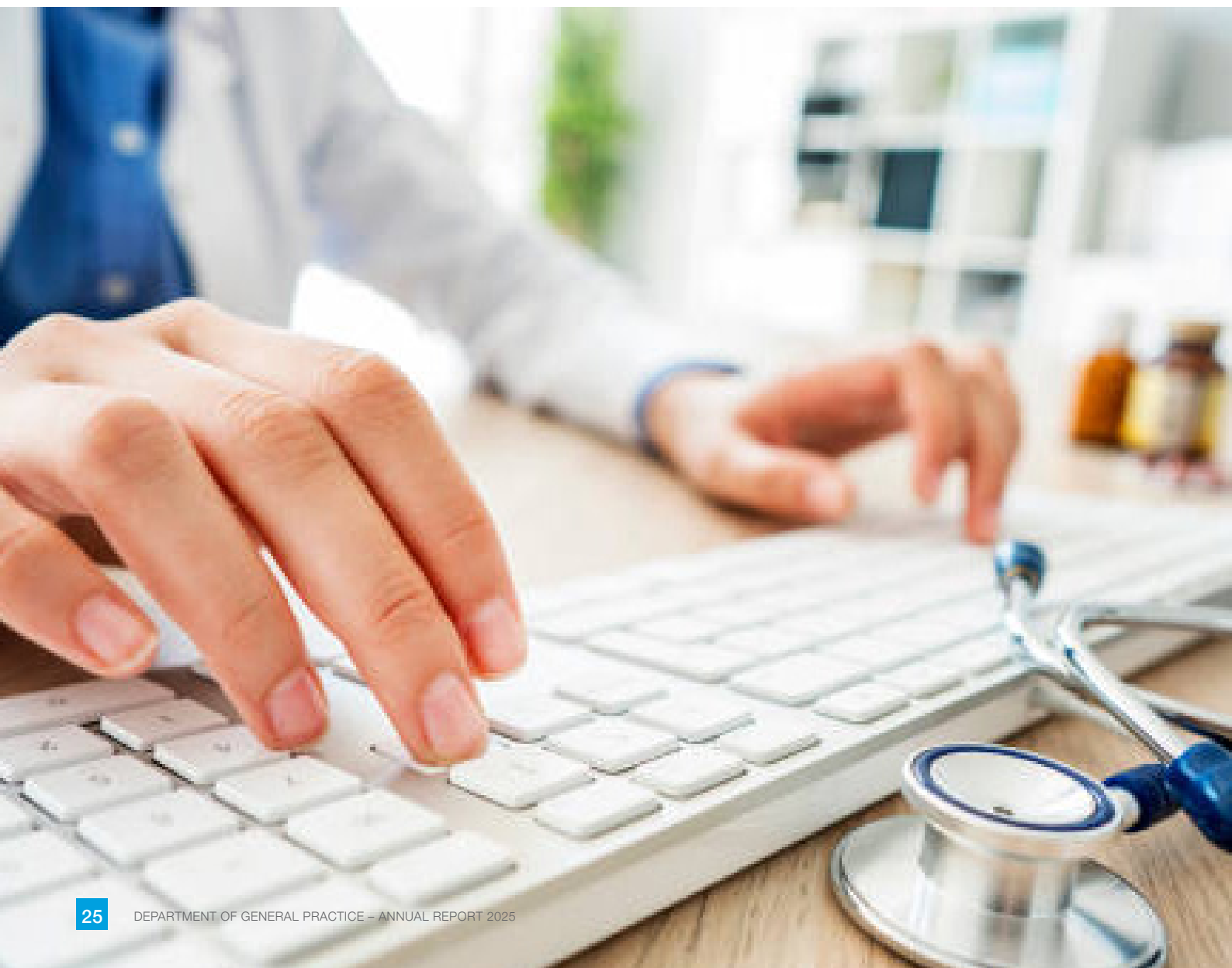
The Medical Abortion Guidelines in Primary care ImplemEntation (MAGPIE) Study aims to support GPs to provide high quality, guideline-concordant medical abortion (MA) care. The study is funded by a Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd / RACGP Foundation Research Grant.

Therapeutic Guidelines is an online resource for Australian clinicians, with topics spanning across major primary care presentations. The topic on MA was first released in 2020 and was one of the first guiding resources available for GPs. Since then, legislative changes have expanded the number of MA prescribers. However, it is unknown how GPs currently use the Therapeutic Guidelines topic on MA and their preferences for its content, format, and functionality.

The MAGPIE Study objectives are to 1) investigate GPs' perspectives on how the Therapeutic Guidelines topic on MA can be improved to support their provision of MA; and 2) provide recommendations for adaptations to the current Therapeutic Guidelines topic on MA.

Data collection was completed at the end of September 2025, consisting of semi-structured interviews with 15 GPs and 15 GPs in training. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data is continuing until late-2025, to better understand GPs' use of this topic, perceived barriers and enablers with its use, and their suggestions for improvements.

By understanding the perspectives of a range of GPs (e.g., experienced, inexperienced, and non-providers of MA), we will develop a set of recommendations for changing the Therapeutic Guidelines topic on MA to improve GPs' use of this topic and provision of guideline-concordant MA care.



VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Authors: Prof Grant Russell, Dr Riki Lane

TRANSFORM – A PATIENT CENTRED COLLABORATION TO INTEGRATE CARE

Healthcare fragmentation is a disconnect between parts of the health system that should be working together to facilitate a seamless journey for people needing healthcare. It occurs when care is provided by multiple clinicians across different organisations that use incompatible communication and IT systems and operate under different funding and business models. People with chronic disease are most affected by a fragmented system. This fragmentation is associated with adverse health outcomes, preventable hospitalisations, duplication of care and unsustainable pressure on the system. It is a major burden for consumers and carers.

TRANSFORM is a 5 year Medical Research Future Fund funded project that will address healthcare fragmentation by improving the consumer journey across the health care system. TRANSFORM evolved from the IMPACT Centre of Research Excellence and collaborations formed from the TROPHI program.

Co-led by Professor Lena Sancu at the University of Melbourne and the DGP's Professor Grant Russell, TRANSFORM will build Consortia in three regions of Melbourne to identify

vulnerable populations and co-design interventions to enhance care integration, reduce duplication, and minimise low-value care. Each consortium will select its own priority population, supported by lived experience consumer networks. A Consortia Learning Collaborative will foster shared learning and support across regions, promoting sustainable, locally tailored solutions. Priority populations will be chosen by each consortium. Several of the priority populations are currently in view and have representation on the investigator team including a carer for a young person with a rare condition, a carer for an older person, and culturally and linguistically diverse person/s.

TRANSFORM's evaluation will assess impacts on patients, providers, and services, explore implementation and estimate economic outcomes.

DGP members of the team include Prof Grant Russell, A/ Prof Chris Barton, Dr Riki Lane and Jag Dhaliwal, Professors Helen Skouteris Velandai Srikanth Jacqueline Boyle, Ines Rio, and Dr Katrina Long come from other parts of Monash University

THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES: DRIVING LGBTIQA+ INCLUSION AT MONASH AND BEYOND

Dr Riki Lane continued to provide collaborative research opportunities for students with the Monash Health Gender Clinic. In 2025 a range of research projects were supported between the two organisations under Riki's guidance, that aimed to improve care and understanding for Trans, Gender Diverse and Non-Binary community in Victoria, led by students and researchers across multiple disciplines.

These included world leading research from PhD students Georgia Webb, Marlene De Bruin, and Jan Kilicaslan that investigates the impact of different models of care, experiences of gender sensitivity, and safety and responsiveness in health care for LGBTIQA+ patients.



Medical students completing SIP rotations participated in research projects that helped develop clinical guidance for Monash Health Gender Clinic clinicians working with clients seeking gender affirming hormones and surgery, and projects investigating neurodivergent clients and clients with co-occurring eating disorders.

Riki continues to be an active and passionate advocate for health in the LGBTIQA+ community and represented the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences as a panelist at the Power of Communities event that celebrated the contributions of Monash staff working to advance inclusion for LGBTIQA+ communities in alignment with the IDAHOBIT theme "Power of Communities".

● COMPLEX AND CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Authors: Prof Grant Russell, A/Prof Chris Barton, Ms Isabella Papadopoulos

RETHINKING REFERRALS TO HOSPITAL CLINICS

Referrals between general practice and hospital-based health services are both important and a part of the health care system that consume significant hospital resources and often frustrates GPs and their practice teams.

INTEGRATE was a project commissioned by the South East Metro Health Services Partnership with the SouthEast Melbourne PHN and Monash Partners. It aimed to identify priority strategies to improve referrals from primary care to hospital outpatient clinics across southeast Melbourne. The team, led by Professor Grant Russell combined lessons from a stateofheart literature review (29 papers from 12 countries), 39 stakeholder interviews (with GPs, hospital consultants and administrators) with two deliberative forums to refine insights and priorities.

We found the GP–specialist referral pathway to be fragmented, inconsistent and administratively burdensome, producing delays that impede timely patient care. Lack of transparency, variations between health services and inconsistent implementation of electronic platforms created confusion and extra work for GPs. The system was full of workarounds that further strained the system and risk inequitable access for vulnerable populations with low English proficiency, lower socioeconomic status or low digital literacy.

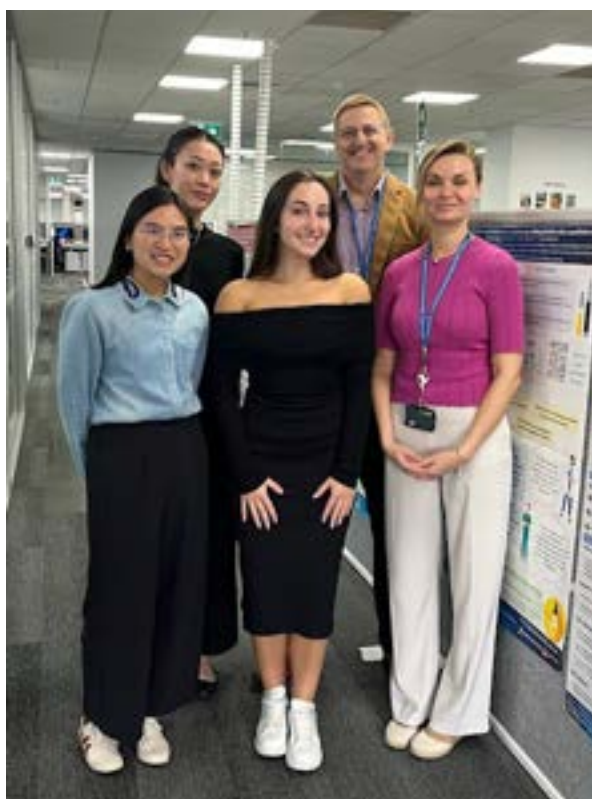
Our report pointed to key reforms that were reliant on a process of codesign between hospitals, health services and the community. Key priorities would include introducing consistent accessible electronic referral platform(s) across the three health services; transparency of the processes for patients and clinicians; and exploration of the potential of new models of care, in particular e-consultation between general practice and hospital services

The South East Metro Health Services Partnership has commenced a process to bring these insights into a reformed model to support primary care integration with hospital care.

Project team Grant Russell Nishadi Withanage Pak Fung Ho, Surabhi Kumble, Riki Lane, Chris Barton Emiko Hunt (all from the Department of General Practice) and Angela Jones and Kath Watson from Monash Partners.

REGIONAL ACCESSIBILITY OF E-CIGARETTES FOR SMOKING CESSATION IN COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

A/Prof Chris Barton and Isabella Papadopoulos have been collaborating with the South East Public Health Unit (SEPHU) through 2025 on research to understand the availability and distribution of therapeutic vapes across community pharmacies within the SEPHU catchment. They surveyed all the community pharmacies in the SEPHU catchment and conducted GIS mapping that revealed just 41.6% of pharmacies in the region stock therapeutic vapes to support smoking cessation. They found there was higher availability in areas of greater socioeconomic advantage. Survey and qualitative interview data from pharmacists highlights tensions between commercial imperatives and public health goals, with many pharmacists expressing discomfort around the perceived shift from cessation support to product supply. Key barriers included regulatory complexity, limited brand availability, and lack of formal guidance. The study underscores the need for clearer policy, enhanced pharmacist education, and stronger GP–pharmacy collaboration to support smoking cessation.



A/Prof Barton and Isabella Papadopoulos with co-investigator Dr Melis Selamoglu and student researchers Nicholas Fu and May Foo.

AMPLIFYING THE UNCLOUD CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT VAPING AMONG MONASH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Following the successful implementation of Amplifying UNCLOUD in 2024, the Department of General Practice has secured further funding from VicHealth to continue and expand the initiative through to 2028. Working closely with the University Health Services, the Monash Chief Medical Officer, and investigators from elsewhere in the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, the program will be delivered across five coordinated working groups, each contributing to a whole-of-university approach to vaping prevention and cessation.

1. University Health Services (UHS)

UHS continues to play a central role in delivering cessation support and running health promotion and outreach activities across Monash campuses. Clinicians have been upskilled to identify e-cigarette use and support cessation attempts via a dedicated appointment type.

2. Vape Free Student Champions

Peer-led engagement remains a cornerstone of the initiative. Student “Vape Free” Champions led over 1,300 conversations with students in 2024, with 80% of students who vape expressing a desire to quit and 70% referred to UHS. From 2025, new Student Champions have been recruited and trained to deliver campaign messaging and facilitate student participation in Pulse surveys.

3. Research Projects

Several research projects will be conducted to build the evidence base about vaping and support prevention and cessation activities on campus. We have established a first of its kind sentinel surveillance program for vaping and nicotine products that will track behaviour change over time. Additional projects will be rolled out in 2026 providing opportunities for research students to contribute to this body of work.

4. Priority Populations

Peer leaders from Indigenous, LGBTQIA+, CALD, and disabled student communities will be supported to co-design tailored interventions. Focus groups will identify community-specific needs and co-design workshops will inform adaptation of UNCLOUD resources for greater impact in these communities.

5. Multi-University Hackathon

A Hackathon will be run in 2026 that will bring together 100 students from five separate universities to co-create innovative solutions for vape-free campuses. Teams will be mentored by industry experts, with the winning team offered a paid internship to implement their ‘hack’.

Amplifying UNCLOUD continues to build student capacity, strengthen partnerships, and embed sustainable, evidence-based approaches to vaping prevention across Monash.



● EDUCATION FOCUSSED RESEARCH

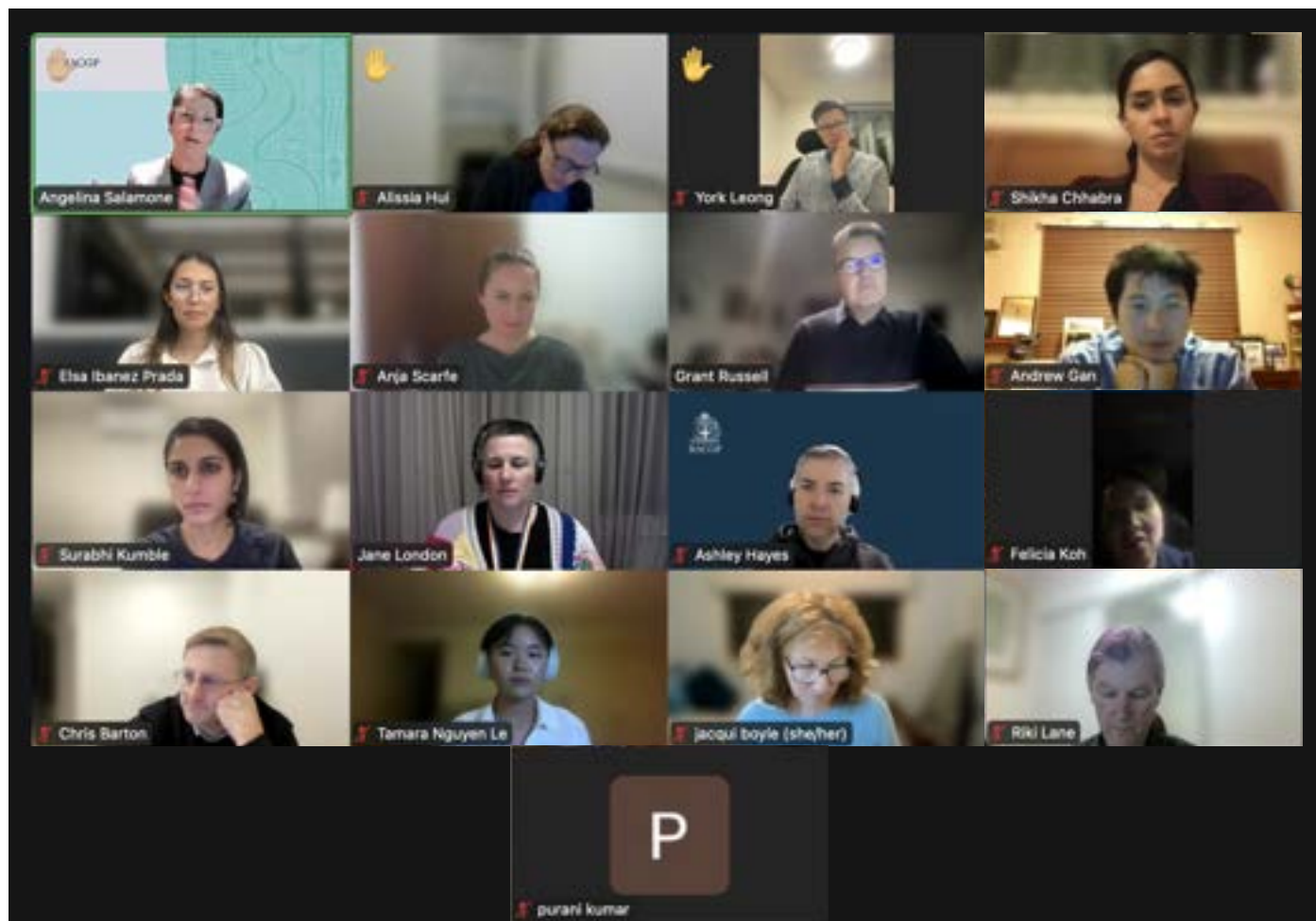
Authors: Prof Grant Russell, Dr Riki Lane

CREATE - COLLABORATIVE REGISTRAR EDUCATION AND TRAINING ENHANCEMENT

CREATE is a two-year RACGP-funded Education Research Grant project that has emerged from the TROPHI collaboration between RACGP, Eastern Health, and the Departments of General Practice at Monash and Melbourne Universities. Based in Outer Eastern Melbourne, the project uses a participatory co-design process to optimise GP training at two critical stages: in-hospital experience and the transition to the first GP term.

This year, the CREATE team completed stakeholder interviews and held two collaborative forums with representatives involved in GP training and education. Using these findings, the thematic coding was completed by medical student Suzy Dingle during her SIP rotation to identify innovations that can improve hospital terms for potential GP registrars. Through these processes, three innovations were co-designed and selected for planning and implementation in partnership with Eastern Health, ensuring alignment with regional priorities and long-term sustainability.

The team also presented at national and international conferences, including AAAPC, GP25, and WONCA, and is in the final stages of publishing its findings. These outcomes aim to enhance the educational experience of GP registrars and strengthen pathways between hospital and community-based training.



TROPHI - THE VICTORIAN COLLABORATION FOR TRANSLATING RESEARCH OUTCOMES INTO THE PRIMARY HEALTH INTERFACE

TROPHI is a collaborative initiative between Monash University's Department of General Practice, RACGP, and University of Melbourne's Department of General Practice. Its mission is to advance high-quality implementation and translational research that delivers contemporary, practice-based evidence to enhance primary health care and patient outcomes in Victoria's outer East Melbourne.

A key focus of TROPHI is building research capacity within primary care. Through a range of initiatives and mentorship of GPs and others working in primary care, TROPHI supports the development of research skills and opportunities for research translation across East Melbourne.

In 2025, TROPHI supported a diverse group of students and researchers working on impactful projects:



Use of Artificial Intelligence in GP-Nurse Handovers in Aged Care Facilities

Led by TROPHI Research Translation Fellow Dr Jag Dhaliwal (Honorary Senior Lecturer, Department of General Practice), this project explored the role of AI in improving communication between GPs and nurses in aged care settings. The work was presented at multiple conferences and is nearing completion, with publications planned.



TROPHI Evaluation

Masters student Rochelle George contributed to the evaluation of TROPHI under the supervision of Nishadi Withanage, with co-supervision support from Dr Jag Dhaliwal.

Regional Needs Analysis

Winter scholar Caroline Filiex, supervised by Elsa Ibanez Prada, updated TROPHI's regional needs analysis. This involved reviewing documents from LGAs, state government, and health organisations, and integrating feedback from TROPHI consumer advisors.

PhD bursaries

Several bursaries were awarded to DGP PhD students including Alissia Hui, Sangita Chakraborty, and Susan Saldanha to support their doctoral research in areas of need within the East Melbourne catchment region of TROPHI.



UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Authors: Dr Nadida Kachkouche and Dr Cathy Grech

2025 YEARS 1 AND 2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE DGP ANNUAL REPORT

The Department of General Practice coordinates and administers the teaching of Clinical Skills in years 1 and 2 of the Monash medicine course at Clayton campus.

The clinical skills team includes the Year 1 Clinical Skills coordinator Dr Nadida Kachkouche, the Year 2 Clinical Skills coordinator Dr Cathy Grech, the Undergraduate Administrative Officer Ms Marion Daniels and our highly esteemed clinical skills tutors.

The Clinical Skills program comprises of 25% of the year 1 and Year 2 curriculum and prepares students for a smooth transition from pre-clinical to clinical years.

In Year 1 and 2 students learn the fundamentals of the medical interview, patient-centred history taking and physical examination skills, as well as communications skills, clinical reasoning skills and certain procedural skills.

The clinical skills team continues to develop and implement novel and innovative way of teaching our students. Our novice students are introduced to clinical skills via the UEDIT model (Understand Explain Demonstrate Instruct Test) approach, which was developed by Nadida as a framework for teaching that acknowledges the fact that physical examination skills incorporate both professionalism and examination skills and highlights the need for a clear understanding of human anatomy and physiology which in turn leads to a better understanding of the examination findings and what they mean. Nadida also continues to collaborate with Nagoya University in Japan, on the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Program, which allows our medical students the opportunity to discuss the challenges of cross-cultural communication and the potential impact on the doctor-patient relationship. Cathy has continued working with the MED Educational team on the podcast series “The Leap: The Classroom to the Clinic”, in which Cathy interviews specialists in the areas the students are currently studying and covers topics such as what drew the specialist to their field, what working as a specialist and student on rotation in their field is like, as well as practical tips around history taking, examination, investigations.

Consumer engagement is an important aspect of the early-years clinical skills program. Our medical students are privileged to have the opportunity to be introduced to volunteer real patients who are well but are living with chronic health conditions at an early stage of their undergraduate medical education. As part of community engagement, the clinical skills program introduced the “I am not a Condition” workshops’ to the year 1 clinical skills program in 2019 and the “Soft Skills are Actually the Hardest Skills” workshop that was introduced in 2024. Participants in these workshops are members of several support groups including Ankylosing Spondylitis Victoria, Creaky Joints Australia and members Multiple Sclerosis society. The aim of these workshops is to raise the students’ awareness regarding the fact that patients are not their condition and should not be treated as such.

Discussions around communication skills with patients with disabilities and the challenges faced by patients with disabilities when communicating with healthcare professionals are also discussed during these workshops.



Photo of Nadida and Marion with the participants at the “Soft Skills are Actually the Hardest Skills” workshop.

Practicing appropriate communication skills when performing a sensitive exam, such as the breast examination, on patients is also organised and taught in year 2 by Clinical Teaching Associates (CTAs) and Cathy, the Year 2 clinical skills coordinator.

The clinical skills team from Clayton has also once again been working hard with our colleagues in Malaysia and Gippsland to develop authentic and reliable assessment processes across the Monash MED campuses for both written as well as practical assessments. This includes the Year 1 Observed Clinical Encounters (OCEs) and the Year 2A APEX (Assessment for Progression Examinations). The APEX, which was first introduced to the MED program in 2023 is undertaken by Year 2A through to Year 5D students and involves students performing specified tasks and receiving immediate feedback on their performance by an examiner.

Innovation in Teaching and Learning in 2025

The Application of the UEDIT approach

In 2025, Nadida subsequently used the UEDIT framework to develop several e-learning modules through collaboration between clinical skills, anatomy and educational designer staff. These modules aim to provide students with a flexible and accessible learning resource that reinforces key physical examination principles. This year, the completed modules were embedded within the year 1 clinical skills learning material. Each module integrates structured explanations with visual demonstrations. The innovation lies in combining the UEDIT framework with an e-learning format, thus complementing face-to-face teaching. Work on completing the next modules is underway.

Once again, we would like to express our gratitude to our wonderful administrator Marion Daniels and our hardworking and dedicated team of tutors. We would also like to thank our wonderful simulated and real patients and – of course- our Year 1 and 2 students, who we have so enjoyed teaching this year.

YEAR 4C GP TEACHING

Author: Dr Harishan Tharmarajah, Curriculum and Assessment Lead for General Practice

The General Practice (GP) teaching program continued to evolve this year with many changes occurring in leadership, curriculum development, assessment and beyond.

The year commenced with the inclusion of two new registrars, Dr Nat Lojanapiwat and Dr Marcus Pensa. They both brought with them a keen interest to teach and develop their skills in education. Dr Jordan Crawford joined the teaching team after completing her registrar year with us the year before. Dr Shonu Pariyaram joined us in the second half of the year to support our assessment planning and delivery while Dr Kimberley Yew was away on maternity leave.

We congratulated A/Prof Jennifer Neil for being appointed the new Head of Curriculum for the Doctor of Medicine program, and I am thankful for her help with my transition as the incoming Curriculum and Assessment Lead for General Practice. We said goodbye to Dr Ronald Schweitzer and thank him for his years of service contributing to our teaching program.

In 2025, we had 303 students come through across 4 rotations. Around 180 GP supervisors had students with them at some point in the year. We successfully recruited and welcomed 6 new GP practices and 15 new GPs to our GP affiliate pool.

It is not possible to run a program like ours without the incredible work that our GP supervisors and practices do to support our student's learning. We are grateful to everyone involved from the administrative staff, nurses, allied health teams and GPs.

I can't speak highly enough about our GP educators. I always admire their professionalism, dedication and skill. It has been great hearing about new ideas and innovations, and thinking about ways to strengthen our GP program. I look forward to working with each of them and supporting their education

journey.

The end of year exam has changed from the traditional Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) to a new exam called the Assessment for Progression Exam (APEX). This is an exam focussing on testing the clinical reasoning capabilities of our students, and serves as an assessment for learning with students being provided valuable feedback at the end of the exam. We thank Dr Kimberley Yew who worked tirelessly to ensure everything was ready before she went on leave. This proved to be invaluable.

The General Practice Student Network (GPSN) continued to play a big part in promoting General Practice as a career and provide educational training programs for students across Victoria. I had the pleasure of attending a skills workshop along with Dr Jordan Crawford where we also had a chance to meet medical educators from other universities and the RACGP.

Given the excellent feedback we received about the quality of our GP rotation, we submitted an oral presentation abstract to the Monash Medical Education Conference about our program. We were successful and will present this in December 2025. We again thank our GP educators and supervisors for the high standard set by them to put us in this position.

I would like to thank both Sandra Zovko and Sarah Budhiwianto who go out of their way each week to ensure everything is running smoothly. I am also grateful to Dr Atish Manek for his leadership, support and feedback.

Moving forward, we have some educational innovations that we hope to incorporate into our program for 2026. I'm excited to see what the future holds.



YEAR 5D

Author: Dr Atish Manek

MED5101 SCHOLARLY INTENSIVE PLACEMENTS

SIPs with the DGP provide an opportunity for students to engage in scholarly work either supervised by a world-leading DGP-Research Team (Research SIP) or a Community General Practitioner (Professional SIP). The DGP was excited to continue its involvement with the SIP program and proposed varied and enticing placements for students to undertake in 2025.

Some examples of 2025 DGP Professional SIPs included; “A CLINICAL AUDIT OF HPV VACCINATION RATES OF YOUNG ADULTS” & “Enactment of the National Lung Cancer Screening Program”. While students benefited through scholarly and clinical work, practices and their patients benefited by having data analysed and presented for service improvement and / or delivery of patient education material. A special thank you is extended to participating General Practice Supervisors.

The 2025 DGP Research SIPs were of equally high quality and variety. Examples included; “THE SOUTHEAST MELBOURNE PRIMARY CARE INTEGRATION PROJECT – UNDERSTANDING THE GP-SPECIALIST REFERRAL PATHWAY”, & “Evaluating Health Promotion in Young Adults: Assessing Behavioural Change and Implementation of a Vape-Free Campus Campaign Among Undergraduate Students”. The high quality of 2025 DGP Research SIPs will enable a number of students to be named as authors on subsequent publications. We look forward to reporting on the continuing success of DGP Scholarly Intensive Placements in 2026.

COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS

We continued the programme in 2025, with the aim of attracting more medical students to select general practice as a future career choice. Yr 5D students ‘opted-in’ to complete a 6 week ‘speciality rotation’ in the community. The students spent time across a variety of settings including traditional general practice / in a RACF supervised by a GP / in an outpatient clinic dedicated to Aboriginal children who are at risk of entering or are in out-of-home care. We hope the students (and their supervisors) will benefit from patient contact across different settings, and appreciate the challenges this brings.

We will be offering a similar experience for 2026.

MONASH GENERAL PRACTICE STUDENTS NETWORK (GPSN)

Authors: Hannah and Isabella

The GPSN is a student-led organisation for Monash medical students interested in General Practice. In 2025, the committee aimed to highlight the diversity and enjoyment of a career in GP through a range of educational and social initiatives.

In Semester 1, GPSN hosted Clinical Skills and Social Nights in Traralgon, Mildura, Bendigo and Metropolitan clinical sites. This involved simulated stations on fundoscopy, otoscopy and speculum examinations with support from the Department of General Practice and final-year students. The team collaborated with the MUMUS Community and Wellbeing Committee to facilitate a 'Crazy Socks 4 Docs' mental health awareness campaign, and co-led the popular Statewide event with other Victorian and Tasmanian universities, offering hands-on ultrasound, suturing and dermoscopy workshops.

Semester 2 featured the annual GP Careers Night, where six GPs shared insights into their diverse practice areas - from refugee, paediatrics, and women's health, to surgery and vastectomies. GPSN facilitated student-led revision nights, including the 4C Apex History + Night and a new Preclinical Murder Mystery case night. With thanks to all members, GPSN developed GP-focused revision resources and multiple-choice questions, recording six new revision lectures presented during the 4C Revision Lecture Day.

It has been a busy, but fulfilling year for Monash GPSN! We extend our thanks to the Department of General Practice for their ongoing support, and look forward to continued collaboration in 2026.







REGISTRARS

Dr Marcus Pensa

My time as an Academic Registrar with DGP in 2025 has been both professionally rewarding and formative. I have contributed to general practice education by leading tutorials for medical students, with a strong focus on applying primary care principles to clinical scenarios. Additionally, I have been involved in the design and review of curriculum content and assessments, as well as the evaluation of students' written work and clinical encounters, helping to ensure fair and consistent assessment. These experiences have strengthened my understanding of medical education from both learner and assessor perspectives.

This year, I also pursued a research project on primary aldosteronism in general practice, culminating in a poster presentation at the AAAPC Conference and participation in GP25. These opportunities reinforced the value of academic inquiry in shaping evidence-based practice.

The Academic Registrar role offers a unique bridge between clinical practice, education, and research, making it an ideal platform for early-career GPs to contribute meaningfully to the future of general practice. It also provides valuable experience for those considering broader leadership or educational roles. I'm grateful to DGP for their support and mentorship throughout this year.

Dr Nat Lojanapiwat



Working as an academic registrar in the Department of General Practice at Monash University has been an incredibly valuable experience. I have felt well-supported in both my teaching and research roles, and welcomed as an active and respected member of the department.

Regular supervision has been a key part of my academic development. My schedule includes weekly department meetings, fortnightly research group and graduate program meetings, as well as regular meetings with my research supervisors every one to two weeks. My research project is progressing well and is on track for submission for publication, where I will be first author. My supervisors are approachable and offer constructive feedback in a timely manner.

In my teaching role, I facilitate small group tutorials for fourth-year medical students during their General Practice rotation. I am also involved in student

assessment, curriculum development and program evaluation. Although I began the year with limited teaching experience, I have grown considerably in both confidence and capability as the year progressed. The positive and encouraging feedback from students and colleagues have been especially rewarding.

The department fosters a strong sense of teamwork and camaraderie through social activities and collaborative committees. This supportive academic environment has solidified my interest in a future career in academic medicine.

TEACHING STAFF

YEAR 1 & 2

Program Coordinators

- Dr Cathy Grech
- Dr Nadida Kachkouche

Administrator

- Ms Marion Daniels

Tutors

- Dr Julian Dart
- Dr Danielle Dowman
- Dr Buddy Reid
- Dr Robyn Ridgway
- Dr Ella Rose
- Dr Monika Coha
- Dr Chathuri Siriwardene
- Dr Harishan Tharmarajah
- Dr Louise Prabhu
- Dr Sally Abromwich

- Dr Laxman Tharmarajah
- Ms Jacquie Wise
- Dr Caitlin Harrison
- Dr Marion Tissera
- Dr Angela Dougall
- Dr Sheila Manmathan
- Dr Cheryl Oh
- Dr Rif Syeda
- Dr Phil Perlstein
- Dr Jen Moon
- Dr Sharmini Kumar

YEAR 4C

Curriculum and Assessment Lead

- Dr Harishan Tharmarajah

Administrators

- Sandra Zovko
- Sarah Budhiwianto

Tutors

- Dr Atish Manek
- Dr Kimberley Yew
- Dr Claire Denness
- Dr Tian Tu
- Dr Pradeep Vijayanand
- Dr Marcus Pensa
- Dr Nuttaradee (Nat) Lojanapiwat
- Dr Paki Rizakis
- Dr Allara Walsh-Howe

- Dr Anu Achar
- Dr Jordan Crawford
- Dr Phil Feren
- Dr Ravi Arya
- Prof Grant Russell
- Dr David Oberklaid
- Dr Leslie Segal
- Dr Ella Rose
- Dr Ronald Schweitzer
- Dr Shish Malgwa
- Dr Shonu Pariyaram

HONOURS STUDENTS



Austin Varghese Swamy

Unmasking Stigma: A qualitative life course analysis of the experiences of older adults living with asthma AND A mixed methods scoping review exploring stigma in older adults living with asthma

Supervisors: A/Prof Chris Barton and Dr Sanduni Madawala



Bisola Morakinyo

What are Australian Obstetricians' and gynaecologists' perceptions and experiences of Interconception Care?

Aga Daanial Hussain

Bridging Communication Gaps in Healthcare: A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Online versus In-person Interprofessional Education for Medical and Interpreting Students.

Supervisors: A/Prof Chris Barton and A/Prof Jennifer Neil



Myat Phou Pwint (Emily) San

Community Pharmacists' Perspectives on Extending their Scope of Practice to Contraceptive Implants Provision

Supervisors: Dr. Anisa Assifi, Prof. Danielle Mazza AM, Anna Barwick OAM



Iris Qingxin Gu

Providing Accessible Treatment to Higher-education Students (PATHS)

Supervisors: Dr. Grant Russell and A./Prof Chris Barton



Kajol Babu

Countering intimate partner violence: Is there a role for community pharmacy?

Supervisors: Dr Anisa Assifi, Susan Saldanha



Sanish Rajbhandari

Social media content analysis of reproductive coercion experiences

Supervisors: Dr Jessica Botfield, Susan Saldanha



Sophie Armstrong

Exploring Community Pharmacists' Perspectives and Needs in Providing Injectable Contraception to Adolescents

Project Supervisors: Dr Anisa Assifi, Prof Danielle Mazza AM, Joanne Gross

MASTERS STUDENTS



Master of Public Health student: Mohammed Nihaal Ahmed

Supervisor: A/Prof Chris Barton

Sentinel surveillance of vaping and nicotine product use among university students.

This project is focused on developing a sentinel surveillance system to monitor the use of vaping and other nicotine-containing products among university students. While most previous work has concentrated on e-cigarettes alone, this study broadens the scope to include products such as snus, snuff, heated tobacco, and nicotine pouches.

The project began with a systematic literature review to identify international prevalence, patterns of use, and existing surveillance approaches. Based on this evidence, a tailored pulse survey is being designed for the Monash student cohort to capture local prevalence and trends. Pilot testing of the survey has already been undertaken with graduate research students to refine its clarity and feasibility.

The longer-term aim of the project is to establish a longitudinal cohort that will allow changes in nicotine use and related health perceptions to be tracked over time. By strengthening surveillance at the university level, the project will generate timely, high-quality data to inform prevention strategies, health services, and policy responses in Victoria.

PHD STUDENTS



Dr Alissia Hui

Supervisors: Prof Danielle Mazza AM
Dr Sharinne Crawford
A/Prof Luke Grzeskowiak

Improving utilisation of long-acting reversible contraception as a hormonal treatment for endometriosis in Australian primary care.

This project will focus on long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) as a hormonal treatment for endometriosis in Australian primary care. LARC uptake in Australia is very low, compared to international benchmarks. This study seeks to better understand why it is not being better utilised in the treatment of endometriosis, and to develop an intervention to address this. The project began with a systematic review and meta-analysis of the efficacy of LARC in the management of endometriosis. Subsequent mixed methods studies including quantitative, qualitative and codesign analyses will be conducted to inform the development of the intervention.



Claire Hutton

Supervisors: A/Prof Chris Barton and
Dr Penny Round

The challenges of providing care to fellow doctors

My PhD focuses on doctors who provide care for their peers, looking at the challenges involved when your patient is also a doctor. I have my final milestone presentation in December 2025, and am due to submit by August 2026.

I have had a longstanding interest in doctors' health, having worked as the consultant psychologist for the AMA (Vic) Peer Support Service since its inception in 2008. As well as part-time PhD study, I teach in post-grad counselling programs at Deakin University, provide psychological support on humanitarian aid training programs and have a small private practice as a counselling psychologist.



Freya Moore

Supervisors: Prof Danielle Mazza AM, Dr Olena Ivanova, Dr Maira Sohail.

Exploring the acceptability and preferences for advance provision of medical abortion pills among women in Australia.

PhD research project description: Freya joined the Department of General Practice and SPHERE in September of 2025 as a PhD candidate. Her research investigates women’s attitudes and preferences regarding advance provision of medical abortion pills as a model for early abortion care in Australia. Using a mixed-methods approach to capture both broad and in-depth perspectives on this model, her project aims to generate user-informed insights that may be used to inform future developments in early abortion care policy and service provision.



Georgia Webb

Supervisors: Dr Riki Lane, A/Prof Chris Barton

Differential outcomes for Trans, Gender Diverse and Non-Binary individuals seeking Hormone Therapy.

This project focuses on the various healthcare pathways available to transgender people wishing to undergo gender affirming hormone therapy. The project is utilising a mixed-methods approach, creating a cohort of hormone therapy clients to analyse what factors lead to better personal outcomes after initiation of hormones, and interviewing clients from the cohort to understand their personal journeys whilst in the system. Factors being investigated include: anxiety, depression and quality of life.



Imi Summers

Supervised by Professor Danielle Mazza, Dr Olena Ivanova, and Professor Kristina Edvarsson

Supporting Women Undergoing Medical Abortion

Imi commenced her PhD in 2025 with SPHERE and the Monash University Department of General Practice, with a focus on developing a digital intervention to improve support for women accessing medical abortion in Australia. By drawing on a co-design approach with providers, as well as women’s experiences and perspectives, her work will inform the development of a digital intervention tool to improve support pathways and access. Imi’s research focuses on addressing gaps in medical abortion safety and care, and aims to amplify women’s voices in reproductive health policy, patient-centred care practices, and autonomy in sexual health choices.



Jenna Perkins

Supervisors: Dr Sharon James, Dr Anisa Assifi and Dr Jessica Botfield

Access to Medication Abortion Care in Australian General Practice: Exploring Young People’s Knowledge, Experiences and Preferences

Jenna’s PhD explores young people’s knowledge, experiences, and preferences in accessing medication abortion care through Australian general practice. The project began with a scoping review of international literature in high-income countries, which identified young people’s limited awareness of medication abortion, confidentiality concerns, and financial and logistical barriers. These findings highlighted the need for tailored reproductive health education, supportive and accessible services, and policies that ensure equitable, non-judgemental care for young people. Building on this, the next phase will use a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, starting with a national survey of Australians aged 15–24 years, followed by qualitative interviews to explore their experiences and preferences in greater depth.



Sangita Chakraborty

Supervisors: Prof Danielle Mazza and Dr Sharinne Crawford

Enhancing services for South Asian women with endometriosis in Australia.

My PhD focuses on improving healthcare services for South Asian women with endometriosis in Australia. By using a co-creation approach with patients, GPs, and stakeholders, my overall aim is to create inclusive, accessible services and a more equitable healthcare system.



Zaynah Ali

Supervised by Anisa Assifi

Evaluation of a community pharmacy intervention that promotes use of contraceptive medicines amongst women at high risk of unintended pregnancy

Zaynah Ali is a registered pharmacist and final year PhD student within the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Monash University, Australia. She currently works as a hospital pharmacist at Monash Health. Zaynah is a qualitative researcher who is interested in expanding pharmacist’ scope of practice. Her PhD research seeks to develop an evidence base for prescribing and resupplying of contraceptive methods by community pharmacists, with a focus on exploring the perspectives of people with lived experiences and navigating service systems.

PhD COMPLETIONS



Susan Saldhana (submitted September 2025)

Susan's doctoral research aimed to understand risk of experiencing reproductive coercion, how this impacts on an individual's health, and how it manifests in general practice. The findings of her PhD will provide insight and guidance for general practitioners to better identify and support individuals who have or are currently experiencing reproductive coercion. Susan was an active member of the DGP student community during her studies and was the Chair of the department's Graduate Research Group in 2023. We wish her all the best in this final stage of her doctoral journey and she awaits the outcome of her thesis examination.

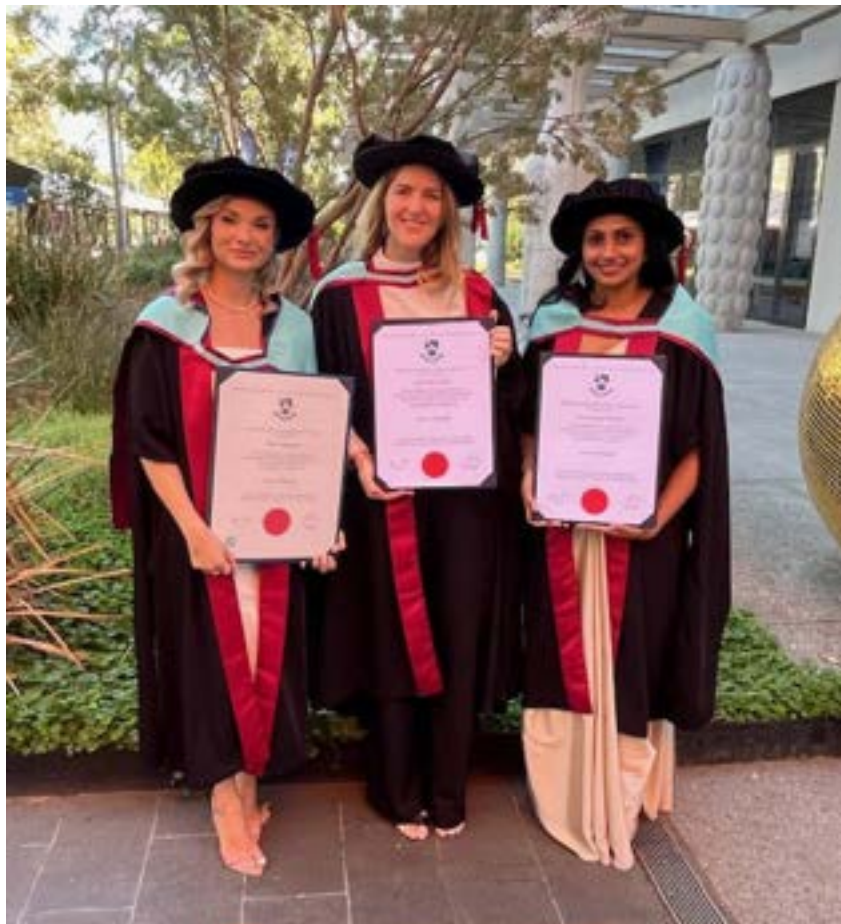


Tesfaye Meckonnen (submitted September 2025)

Tesfaye's research aimed to explore factors associated with the timing of care and its impact on outcomes for patients filing claims for musculoskeletal injuries within workers compensation schemes. His research contributes to strategies for ensuring timely, accessible and high-quality care delivery. Tesfaye was an active member of the DGP student community during his studies and was part of the department's academic seminar organising committee in 2024 and 2025. We wish him all the best in this final stage of his doctoral journey as he awaits the outcome of his thesis examination.

PhD GRADUATIONS

Congratulations to DGP PhD students Melis Selamoglu, Jess Moulton, and Nishadi Withanage who had the delight of graduating together at the May 2025 graduation ceremony held at Clayton campus. We wish all three the best as they embark on their respective research careers.



VISITING SCHOLARS

Professor Daniel Grossman (Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH), USA) - February 2025

SPHERE welcomed Professor Daniel Grossman, Director of ANSIRH. He met with SPHERE researchers to discuss collaborative opportunities and share U.S. insights into pharmacist-dispensed and telehealth models, including potential over-the-counter access to reproductive medications. His reflections on Australia's progressive reforms sparked valuable dialogue on evidence-based policy and care. SPHERE thanks Professor Grossman for his visit and thoughtful contributions, and looks forward to future collaborations in advancing reproductive health research and policy.



L-R: Professor Danielle Mazza AM (Monash University), Dr Carolyn Westhoff (Columbia University), Professor Daniel Grossman (ANSIRH)

Associate Professor Veronica Vernon (Butler University, USA) - May 2025

SPHERE hosted Associate Professor Veronica Vernon and colleagues from Butler University. The team shared insights from their work training U.S. pharmacists to deliver contraceptive services, sparking discussion on adapting similar models in Australia. The visit highlighted SPHERE's commitment to expanding access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and the evolving role of pharmacists in care delivery. Despite differing healthcare systems, the exchange fostered shared learning and collaboration. SPHERE sincerely thanks the Butler University team for their energy and dedication, and looks forward to future partnerships in advancing reproductive healthcare.



L-R: Dr Anisa Assifi (Monash University), Dr Tracey Sprunger (Butler University), A/Prof Safeera Hussainy (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre), Dr Veronica Vernon (Butler University), Zaynah Ali (Monash University), Reese Wyndham (Butler University), Sydney Taylor (Butler University), Jordyn Leining (Butler University)



Dr Elizabeth Sully (Guttmacher Institute, USA)

In May 2025, SPHERE was honoured to host Dr Elizabeth Sully from the Guttmacher Institute (USA) at Monash University. Dr Sully shared bold new thinking on global family planning indicators, introducing a person-centred framework grounded in reproductive rights and justice. Her approach shifts the focus from traditional metrics to understanding how well individuals' contraceptive needs are met and their satisfaction with available options. SPHERE extends its sincere thanks to Dr Sully for joining us and contributing to this important dialogue on advancing sexual and reproductive health research.

Dr Danielle Schoenaker (University of Southampton, UK)

In August 2025, SPHERE welcomed Dr Danielle Schoenaker, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, to Monash University. Dr Schoenaker delivered an insightful presentation on improving preconception care in general practice through co-developed approaches with patients and practitioners. Her research focuses on narrowing inequalities in preconception health to benefit current and future generations, using linked routine health data to strengthen the case for early intervention. SPHERE thanks Dr Schoenaker for her valuable contributions and looks forward to future collaboration in advancing equitable, evidence-based strategies for preconception and reproductive healthcare.



Professor Wendy Norman (University of British Columbia, Canada)

In September 2025, SPHERE was pleased to host Professor Wendy Norman at Monash University for the ORIENT Study Evaluation Workshop and a dedicated session on research impact. Professor Norman led a workshop focused on effectively communicating research impact in grant applications and academic CVs. Drawing on her extensive experience, she guided researchers in strengthening their impact narratives. SPHERE thanks Professor Norman for her valuable contributions and looks forward to future collaboration in advancing reproductive health research and policy.

Dr Dea Kejlberg Andelius

In August 2025, Dea, a GP trainee and PhD student from Aarhus University, Denmark, visited the Department of General Practice where she joined our fortnightly GRG workshop program for PhD students, gave a presentation on her doctoral research at the academic seminar, and presented a poster at the AAAPC conference in Geelong. Her doctoral research aims to identify the proportion of patients with COPD who report avoidance behavior related to physical activity and improve participation in physical activity among patients. Dea is the second PhD scholar from Aarhus to visit the department and we hope to continue to grow this relationship and host future students participating in international placements as part of their research training.



GRADUATE RESEARCH GROUP (GRG)

Author: Dr Alissia Hui

2025 was another busy, positive year for the Graduate Research Group (GRG) in the DGP. Founded in 2018, the GRG remains a friendly, active space for research students and academic registrars to learn, share ideas, and build skills. The group is student-led, with ongoing mentorship from Associate Professor Chris Barton and oversight from the DGP Research Committee.

This year the GRG was chaired by PhD student Georgia Webb, with Alissia Hui as deputy chair. Over 2025 we have had 10 SIP students, 3 undergraduate science and public health placement students, 8 Honours students, 8 Masters students, 10 PhD students, 2 GP registrars and 1 international GP PhD scholar (from Denmark) involved in GRG activities.

Our fortnightly meetings kept a practical focus: informative sessions on research methods and skills, student practice presentations with constructive feedback, and time to discuss projects and questions. The emphasis on peer feedback helped refine presentations, conference abstracts, posters, and progress across the group.

We also kept the social side fun and welcoming, with a casual coffee catch-up before meetings that helped with networking and peer support. We celebrated PhD conferrals for Dr Nishadi Withanage, Dr Jessica Moulton, and Dr Melis Selamoglu with an afternoon tea.

The GRG heads into next year keen to keep thriving, engaging through our sessions, and supporting each other's research journeys.



MEDIA AND MARKETING COMMITTEE

Author: A/Prof Chris Barton

The Media and Marketing committees efforts focused on promoting opportunities for registrars and research students to join the Department of General Practice. We also supported students preparing for the AAAPC conference.

Activities included:

- Attendance at the BMedSc Honours Information evening
- Attendance at the Alfred Precinct Honours Information event
- Preparation of a video to support the RACGP promote opportunities for Academic Post registrars at Victorian universities

Each year, one of the big tasks for the Committee is the production of the Annual Report. I would like to thank all the staff and students who have contributed to the report this year. In particular, I'd like to thank Claudia Morando-Stokoe and Levina Rahardjo for their support with putting the 2025 Annual Report together.



MONASH PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORK (MONREN)

Monash University's Practice-Based Research and Education Network (MonREN) connects GPs, practice managers, practice nurses, and researchers across eastern and south-eastern Melbourne. Over the last few years we have been working to increase MonREN's visibility to GPs, community stakeholders and key groups within Monash University.

In 2025, MonREN continued to bridge the gap between everyday clinical care and academic research, growing research capacity and expanding partnerships with students, research teams, and university departments. Key achievements include:

- Supporting the recruitment of over 20 research projects, providing practices and clinicians with direct involvement in innovative studies.
- Hosting two Scholarly Intensive Placement (SIP) students and supervising an Honours student project, reinforcing our commitment to nurturing the next generation of primary care researchers.
- Completing a scoping review that contributes to evidence-based understanding of practice-based research networks and integrative care.
- Delivering a workshop and sharing insights at the national 2025 AAAPC conference.
- Building strong internal and external relationships, including partnerships with General Practice Supervisors Australia (GPSA) and sponsorship from the General Practice Students Network (GPSN).
- Publishing bi-monthly research newsletters to share opportunities, outcomes, and resources with our expanding network.
- Strengthened cross-disciplinary collaboration by building projects and partnerships across university departments.
- Retaining a dedicated and insightful Steering Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group, providing guidance and strategic direction for MonREN's growth.

MonREN's progress this year reflects its central role in connecting clinicians and researchers, and its ongoing commitment to advancing primary care through collaborative, practice-based research.





RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Throughout 2025, the DGP Research Committee focused on strengthening the department's research culture and strategic direction. Monthly meetings featured rotating research stories, offering members a platform to share personal experiences and lessons learned. The committee prepared for a strategic planning day in November, aiming to refine departmental research themes and advocate for a formal Education Research stream. This initiative reflects a broader commitment to fostering innovation and supporting emerging researchers.

Graduate student support remained a central priority. The Graduate Research Group (GRG) facilitated orientation, well-being sessions, and peer engagement, while alumni achievements were celebrated. However, funding transparency emerged as a significant concern. The committee raised issues around inconsistent professional development reimbursements and the lack of departmental control over Honours and HDR funding.

Additionally, the rapid evolution of AI tools prompted ongoing discussions around ethical use, supervision boundaries, and training. The committee initiated plans for AI workshops in 2026 and explored how AI could support research workflows without compromising academic integrity. Additionally, the Project Managers Group was restructured to improve collaboration and mentoring across roles. Overall, the committee demonstrated a proactive and inclusive approach to building a resilient, forward-thinking research environment.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Author: Dr Atish Manek

The Department of General Practice (DGP) Social Committee continued to meet frequently throughout 2024. This year's members included Atish Manek, Maria De Leon-Santiago, Claudia Morando-Stokoe, Kajol Babu, Tesfaye Mekonnen, Maira Sohail, Satish Melwani, Jenna Perkins, Mae Rilloraza. Together, the committee has kept the DGP socially engaged during 2025.

2025 kicked off with the ever-popular International Lunch. Staff prepared and shared a meal with their colleagues. Similar to previous years, it was an enjoyable event where there was no shortage of delicious flavours and smiles shared.

In quick succession we hosted the 'biggest morning tea', raising money on behalf of the Cancer Council.

At the time of writing, the social committee is in the process of raising funds for Steptember, & preparing for our second International Lunch. We also have a keen eye on the end of year festivities. We look forward to celebrating with you soon!!

SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Authors: Nadida Kachkouche, Sandra Zovko, Levina Rahardjo, Joly Kwek, Jordan Crawford, and Emily San.

In alignment with Monash University's commitments to driving sustainable change, the Department of General Practice (DGP) is dedicated to embedding sustainability across all areas of its operations, including teaching, research and workplace culture.

This year's members include Nadida Kachkouche, Sandra Zovko, Levina Rahardjo, Joly Kwek, Jordan Crawford and Emily San.

In 2025, the committee focused on three key goals:

- Zero Hunger;
- Good Health and Wellbeing for the DGP Staff;
- Responsible Consumption and Production.

Committee members collaborate and meet up to ensure broad staff engagement through regular meetings. Education is a central tool, with activities including presentations, sharing tips on reducing waste, and stretching exercises to promote staff wellbeing.

Key initiatives in 2025:

- **Coffee Card Initiative:** A campaign to recognise and encourage staff and students to acknowledge efforts.
- **Food Rescue Initiative:** Weekly bread collection from Wanda Street Bakery in Mulgrave to support Monash Medical students, helping reduce food waste while supporting wellbeing within the Monash University community.
- **'Share the Dignity' Donation Drives:**
 - > Collected period products to support women, girls, and people who menstruate facing homelessness, domestic violence, or financial hardship.
 - > Organising handbag donations filled with essential items for the 'It's in the bag', an initiative that aims at giving hope and dignity to women and girls spending Christmas in a domestic violence refuge or homelessness shelter.
- **Soft Plastics Recycling:** Coordinated the collection and responsible disposal of soft plastics by staff and students.
- **STEPtember Participation:** Encouraged staff and students to join the national step challenge supporting cerebral palsy.
- **Weekly Wellbeing Walks:** Held every Wednesday to promote physical activity and connections.
- **Wellness Events:** In partnership with Monash Wellbeing, hosted by the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (SPHPM) and organised by DGP Sustainability and Wellbeing Committee, two one-off events were delivered with services provided by Bupa and Medibank, offering free skin checks, seated massages, and nutritious smoothies for staff and students at the SPHPM.

These initiatives reflect the department's ongoing commitment to sustainability, wellbeing, and community engagement.



A team member dropping off period products at the "Share the Dignity" point.



Staff enjoying a seated massage during the Wellbeing Event, promoting relaxation and self-care in the workplace.



Sandra and a representative from Medibank enjoying a refreshing smoothie during the Wellbeing Event, promoting healthy eating habits and workplace wellness.



Collection point for soft plastic recycling initiative at the DGP.

DGP ACADEMIC SEMINARS

Authors: Dr Kimberley Yew, Dr Anisa Assifi, Levina Rahardjo, Sarah Budhiwianto, Tesfaye Mekonnen

This year, the Academic Seminar Committee delivered a dynamic program featuring distinguished national and international speakers. A highlight was a joint webinar with The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, and Professor Dan Grossman from UCSF, USA.

International guests included:

- Dr Carolyn Westhoff from Columbia University, New York, USA
- Dr Danielle Schoenaker from University of Southampton, England
- Dr Karin Iwarsson from Karolinska Institute, Sweden
- Dr Dea Andelius from Aarhus University, Denmark

We were also pleased to host a number of domestic speakers:

- A/Prof Cathy Haigh and team from Monash Rural Health
- Dr Narelle Cox from The Alfred Centre
- A/Prof Julie Willems from Monash Rural Health
- A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson from La Trobe University

Seminar topics ranged widely across primary care, including GP training gaps, migrant women's midlife care, aged care placements, contraceptive research, and pulmonary rehabilitation.

The Department thanks the 2025 Academic Seminar Coordinators Dr Kimberley Yew, Dr Anisa Assifi, Tesfaye Mekonnen PhD, Sarah Budhiwianto, and Levina Rahardjo for their outstanding work in delivering this important program. Special thanks to Claudia Morando-Stokoe for her facilitation of webinars delivered by SPHERE CRE guests and to Kathryn Daly for her support in organising graduate research milestone seminars.



A/Prof Chris Barton and Dr Kejlberg Andelius (Visiting scholar, Denmark)



Dr. Olena Ivanova (SPHERE, Monash University, Australia) and Dr. Elizabeth Kemigisha (Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda) presented the REPEAT project.

FAREWELLS



Jeana Wong

Jeana commenced her PhD candidature with the Department of General Practice, with her work forming part of the realist evaluation of the ORIENT Trial. Jeana was a valuable member of the team and made a number of important contributions to the trial. She conducted a systematic review evaluating the impact of primary

care nurse and midwife delivered interventions on access to contraception and abortion care, which is currently under review. She also undertook the planning and implementation of recruitment and data collection for qualitative interviews with GPs, practice nurses, practice managers and patient for the ORIENT trial, which are critical components of the realist evaluation. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours and thank her for her valuable contributions.



Mae Rilloraza

Mae joined the Department of General Practice as the Clinical Trial Coordinator for the ORIENT trial. She played a key role in a number of critical aspects of the trial, including all planning and preparations, recruiting participating general practices, and implementation of the trial support activities and

intervention. She has been an invaluable member of the team, and we are very grateful for her hard work and dedication and wish her all the best for the future.



Elizabeth Lehman

We bid farewell to Elizabeth Lehman in June this year. Elizabeth joined the Department of General Practice in late 2023 as a Project Office on the ALLIANCE Trial within SPHERE CRE. Elizabeth's dedication to ensuring the successful delivery and then evaluation of the trial has been invaluable. Through her

role, she built strong working relationships with trial participants and showed constant thoughtfulness and consideration for the research. She was also an invaluable member of the sustainability committee. It has been lovely working with Elizabeth, and she will be greatly missed by the ALLIANCE team. We wish her all the best in her new role and her future endeavours.



Ella Healy

We would like to say farewell to Ella Healy who assumed the role of SPHERE Senior Policy and Impact Officer back in February 2024. Ella supported the translation of SPHERE's research in the policy space, both nationally and at the state level, through the SPHERE Coalition. In what is often a fast-

changing environment, Ella has been integral to making sure that the evidence from SPHERE's research program informs policy decisions that can help improve women's sexual reproductive health in Australia. We thank Ella for her work with us and wish her all the best in her new role at Climateworks Centre.



Catriona Rowe

In December 2024, we said farewell to Catriona Rowe. Cat had been working at Monash University for over 17 years, many of these in the Department of General Practice. Cat had worked across a number of projects in the DGP over the years, most notably on IMPROVE and the Endo-MP project, where she was a

skilled and organised Senior Research Officer and a wonderful contributor to the team. Cat has taken a break from paid work to focus on her studies and her family.



Jenny Neil

Farewell and Congratulations to A/Prof Jennifer Neil

The department extends its heartfelt congratulations to A/Prof Jennifer Neil, Curriculum and Assessment Lead, on her promotion to Head of Curriculum at Monash Medical School. This is

a remarkable achievement and a reflection of Jennifer's outstanding contributions to medical education.

Throughout her tenure, Jennifer has exemplified strong and thoughtful leadership. Her ability to navigate complex challenges with clarity and determination has been instrumental in advancing the department's curriculum and assessment strategies and building meaningful relationships with external stakeholders.

While she will be greatly missed, we wish Jenny every success in her new role and look forward to seeing the continued impact of her work at Monash Medical School. We also hope to collaborate with her in the future as she leads curriculum innovation across the faculty.

CONFERENCES



AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ACADEMIC PRIMARY CARE (AAAPC) ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE REPORT

The AAAPC Conference was held at the beautiful Waterfront Campus of Deakin University in Geelong. The conference aims to advocate and support the Australasian Academic primary care community to improve healthcare policy, education and practice. The department had many presenters, both oral and poster, who showcased work ranging from Women's reproductive health to stigma in respiratory related conditions.

The overall conference was a fantastic opportunity for the team to present their own work whilst learning about other interesting areas of research. The connections made through networking with other primary care researchers were a fantastic bonus alongside the delicious food and the keynote speakers.

We all had a wonderful time exploring Geelong, growing in our research careers, dining at the annual conference dinner, and made memories which will last a lifetime.





Danielle speaking at the Life as a Clinician-Scientist symposium held by the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences, 9 August 2025.



Prof Danielle Mazza speaking at the Symposium on Abortion held by Victorian Women's Health Advisory Council 28 April 2025, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

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