

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Health care partners in Sydney's west

Professor Jennifer Reath, Drs Penelope Burns, Ron Brooker and Penny Abbott from the School of Medicine, have been awarded funding to evaluate the partnership between the Medicare Local charged with developing primary health care for western Sydney and the Local Health District in the same area. The project, supported by WentWest (Western Sydney Medicare Local), will consider the impact of the partnership on health care provision for people in Auburn, Blacktown, Baulkham Hills, Holroyd and Parramatta local government areas.

'Both organisations aim to improve health outcomes of individuals and communities within the region and each is committed to integrating health care across primary, secondary and tertiary health care settings,' says Professor Reath. To this end the organisations signed a Partnership Memorandum, committing to '... work together in the best interests of the western Sydney community ...' by collaborating '... to establish the Partnership to address agreed Common Health Priorities, and to engage in and support those of each other's programs, projects and committees which may be identified over time in the Shared Geographical boundaries'. Professor Reath, who has over three decades' experience as a general practitioner, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and her team will seek to identify measures of success or otherwise.

The Western Sydney Medicare Local area includes pockets of affluence and areas of extreme social disadvantage. With a population of about 820,000, its communities are a mix of urban, outer-urban and semi-rural. It is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in Australia; a large refugee population; high numbers of foreign-born residents with poor English; and a significant ageing population. The most socially disadvantaged areas also have the highest rate of risk behaviours (physical inactivity, smoking, overweight and



obesity); chronic disease such as diabetes; mental ill health; unemployment; and domestic violence. An additional challenge is an ageing GP workforce.

The aim of this project is to share the knowledge of "what works and why". The project will map the intended partnership impacts, outcomes and outputs as well as the activities and inputs using a Program Logic model. Given the population challenges of the region, improving and integrating health care for all residents of western Sydney is an urgent priority.

Project Title: Evaluation of the Western Sydney Medicare Local and Western Sydney Local Health District Partnership Memorandum

Funding has been set at: \$122,177

Contact Details: j.reath@uws.edu.au

URL - <http://www.uws.edu.au/medicine>

April 2014