

## Mind the gap

In this issue of *Australian Health Review*, the contributing authors explore the issues associated with their attempts to bridge the well recognised gap between research and practice in health policy and management. We have heard that it took nearly 200 years from the time that a cure was found for scurvy to the time when the new practices were adopted by the British navy.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the timeframes are not as long, but there still appears to be little evidence of research informing policy development and management practice in health care. There have been discussions over many years in many disciplines on the most appropriate ways to bridge this gap.

This issue provides an opportunity for practitioners and researchers to share the practices that have worked for them. Judith Dwyer, who completed her term as AHR co-editor on her appointment as Professor of Health Service Management at Flinders University, discusses her personal practice–research journey and endorses implementation research (page 424). Peter Harvey (page 419) laments the lack of focus on the determinants of health in the search for ways to improve population health outcomes.

Papers from Hunter New England Area Health Service in New South Wales (page 427 and page 435) and the National Institute of Clinical Studies in Melbourne (page 474) provide information on practitioners' need for and use of research evidence. Other papers provide discussion of the success or otherwise of the use of evidence to transform practice. Rebbeck and colleagues discuss the implementation of clinical guidelines for whiplash injury (page 442), Nicholl and Cattell focus on reducing perineal trauma in obstetrical and midwifery practice through use of evidence (page 462), Forssman et al describe an evidence-informed public health intervention (page 458) and Mulligan looks at use of data to improve abortion services (page 468). Finally, Gray and colleagues outline the development of a method to simulate the impact of policy scenarios at the acute–aged care interface (page 450).

At one of the most prestigious forums for management academics, a leading presenter gave his perspective: "Each August, we (academics) come to talk

with each other; during the rest of the year we read each others' papers in our journals and write our own papers so that we, in turn, have an audience the following August: an incestuous, closed loop".<sup>2</sup> It is hoped that *Australian Health Review* can continue to promote the essential exchanges between researchers and practitioners and provide greater input into the loop.

### Also in this issue: help in traversing the narrows

Two companion papers suggest how population health surveys can be used to improve primary health care (page 485 and page 496), and Schofield and Earnest explore how projected demographic change may impact the need for public hospital care (page 507). The current thinking on nursing morale is presented in a review paper by Day et al (page 516), and O'Brien and colleagues from Western Australia provide their evaluation of a "fast track" emergency service (page 525).

### Bridging the gap

We have included a call for papers on health professional education, and hope for some lively debate given the changing landscape in tertiary education.

Both Judith Dwyer and I would like to thank all of the people that have enthusiastically given their time to provide reviews for *AHR*. The Journal has content in many areas, and we are extremely grateful for the expertise of our reviewers.

I would also like to express my personal thanks to Judith Dwyer. While her outstanding contributions as an editor will be missed, I am grateful for her ongoing advice, and support of the Journal.

**Sandra G Leggat**

Editor, *Australian Health Review*

1 Mosteller F. Innovation and evaluation. *Science* 1981; 211: 881-6.

2 Hambrick DC. 1993 Presidential address: what if the Academy actually mattered? *Academy of Management Review* 1993; 19: 11-16. □