

Editorial Issue 4 2010

Access and more

Access to needed care is fundamental to a good primary health care system. This issue of the *AJPH* highlights some important access topics. The availability of primary care physicians is addressed by Roeger *et al.* using an innovative method in the rapidly developing field of geographic information systems (GIS). Other papers cover more specific issues of access: access of Indigenous patients to primary oral health service provision in rural and remote WA (Kruger *et al.*), and of children and adolescents in out-of-home care to comprehensive health assessments in general practice (Webster *et al.*).

Descriptive research is an essential precursor to developing appropriate interventions to improve access or care delivery. This issue features several papers which investigate the perceptions of primary care professionals about barriers to addressing specific topics. As well as Webster *et al.*'s paper, Ball *et al.* use such methods to examine nutrition in general practice, Allan to investigate drug and alcohol services and mental health services in rural and remote Australia, and in a different setting, Doyle and Ristevski investigate the perspectives of teachers and health workers on promoting ear health within primary schools. Finally, Henderson *et al.* examine Australian consumers' perceptions of food safety.

As is appropriate for a journal which integrates theory and practice in primary health, another theme in these papers is the use of specific models or frameworks. To guide their research methodology Bamberg *et al.* use implementation science in developing research and evaluation capacity in community health, and Hallinan uses program logic to examine the Pap nurse in general practice program. Bird *et al.* assess the effects of an integrated care facilitation model, on the ever topical issue of reducing use of hospital resources by patients with chronic conditions.

As Lawn states in her paper on chronic disease self management, 'organisational change aimed at service improvement continues to be a challenging process for many health services, managers and teams'. As demand grows and both patients and the workforce age, it is more important than ever that primary health care professionals work with researchers and evaluators to reflect on and publish their experiences of implementing changes, for the benefit of themselves and their sector.

Libby Kalucy
Co-editor in Chief