

## Editorial Issue 3 2014

### Grounding research in reality

Research that is grounded in reality has more chance of being applied and making a difference in the real world. This is the message from the Primary Health Care Research Conference in Canberra in July 2014, which took as its theme 'Integrating knowledge exchange to improve primary health care outcomes'. The phrases 'grounding research in reality' and 'enlightening reality with research' were chosen within the conference as the best phrases to express the meaning behind the abstract terms of knowledge exchange and knowledge translation.

A conference like this one provides many opportunities for discussions between consumers, managers, health care providers, policy makers and researchers that lead to better understanding of the other's reasons for being in the health care space. For research to be grounded in reality, such interactions need to take place at all stages of the research process, particularly in choosing the research question, interpreting the findings from different perspectives and disseminating the results in appropriate ways. As usual, this is easier to say than to do. Like other forms of cooperation it requires structure, shared meaning and purpose as well as goodwill.

We know that primary health care has as many realities as it has settings and disciplines. The papers in this issue illustrate the way research can shed light on these realities so that it is easier to see the way ahead to improve care. For example, Phillips *et al.* investigated clinicians' perspectives and current practices to enlighten the reality of supporting patients to self-manage chronic

disease. Crotty *et al.* researched the perspective of external agencies to shed light on collaboration in mental health services for older people in rural areas. Wallace *et al.*'s research illustrated the realities of the *ad hoc* nature of clinical management of chronic hepatitis B in the remote communities of the Torres Strait. The practice and innovation paper by Pain *et al.* describes the realities of general practice within a residential aged care facility, and the need to adapt and refine the service model to suit the setting with knowledge exchange throughout the process.

Publishing also needs to be grounded in reality. Instead of my usual editor's role of reading disembodied journal papers on a computer screen, it was refreshing to attend the conference and meet with authors who have published in our journal. I heard what this has meant to them and their research, as well as discussing ideas with prospective authors. Grounding research in reality requires contact and real exchange of ideas between different groups of people. Publishing research in a high quality peer-reviewed journal is essential for the credibility of the researchers and the research, and to make sure the findings are available beyond the reach of the research team and contribute to a broader body of knowledge over a longer period of time. In this way research can enlighten the reality of health care.

Elizabeth Kalucy OAM  
Editor in Chief