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INCENTIVE PAY FOR GPs TO BE EXPLORED BY RESEARCHERS

The possibility that health care quality could improve if doctors were paid incentive payments will be examined as part of the new round of funding from the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI), based at ANU.

Professor Anthony Scott and his team from University of Melbourne hope to determine the right balance between pay-for-performance and quality improvement, which has rapidly increased the income of GPs in the UK but at great cost to government.

Australia already has a system of pay-for-performance in its Practice Incentive Payments scheme – one-off payments to practices when certain services are offered to patients – but is yet to embrace a system like that in the UK.

Professor Scott says little is known about the impact on quality these payments have had. “The role and impact of payment incentives depends on a number of factors, including the amount of the payment, how the payment is made and the factors motivating primary care teams and their members including sources of motivation.

“Success of financial incentives is also dependent on the costs of participating in these schemes, the additional effort required by the primary care team to increase quality of care to meet the incentive requirements, and support provided to help reduce these costs by regional primary care organisations or clinical networks,” he said.

This is one of seven projects funded under the latest APHCRI commissioning round. The research will offer policy options for governments to consider. Total funding in this research round is \$1.7 million.

Other projects include:

- Dr Elizabeth Comino, University of New South Wales: Optimising access to ‘best practice’ primary health care
- Dr Lucio Naccarella, Australian Health Workforce Institute: Incentives for Primary Health Care Team Service Provision
- Associate Professor Jeffrey Fuller, Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health: What evidence is there about the effectiveness of strategies to improve linkage in primary mental health care and how might this inform Australian policy and practice?
- Professor Mark Harris, University of New South Wales: Effective determinants for supporting lifestyle health literacy and self management skills in primary health care
- Professor Robert Bush, University of Queensland: Advancing Health Literacy through Primary Health Care Systems
- Dr Christine Phillips, The Australian National University: Improving Quality through Clinical Governance in Primary Health Care

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