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FUNDING FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HEALTH RESEARCH

Better systems of communication between health workers caring for patients with chronic and complex illnesses will be investigated in new research funded by the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APCHRI), based at ANU.

Professor David Currow, from Flinders University, said his research should form a best-practice model for communication between health workers.

The systems in place for general practice, nurses, hospitals and social workers to discuss patient care are 'patchy' at present, though international models show some good examples of care.

The research will cover the whole spectrum of health and social care problems in our communities, from aged care to people with chronic illnesses.

"If it's useful for health professionals to be talking to each other, when is the best time and how do we do that? We believe this review will show the benefits of this approach are far greater than we are aware," he said.

Professor David Currow's research is one of three South Australian projects to be funded.

Flinders University Professor John Wakerman will investigate models of rural and remote health care that have been used in the past, to try and establish a pattern of successful endeavours in an attempt to replicate them in the future.

"Since the first National Rural Health Strategy in 1994, there has been a decade of rural and remote health service innovation and reform in Australia. The problem in rural and remote primary health care service development is not lack of innovation, but failure to properly evaluate and glean the lessons from this change and generalise them," he said

University of Adelaide Associate Professor Alan Crockett will investigate models of organisation and financing of health care for mild and moderate chronic lung disease.

"The primary reason for looking at it is if we can change the policy about managing mild disease maybe we can reduce the burden of the severe stage of these disease on the community," he said.

These projects are three of 12 projects around the nation funded by the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) based at ANU, in its second major funding round for 2005.

The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute was set up as part of a Federal Government strategy to improve the knowledge base in primary health care policy. This is the Institute's fourth funding round of research into primary health care.

Each of the 12 projects will be funded for 12 months with results expected in September next year. Funding in this round totalled \$1,724,200.

APHCRI Director, Professor Nicholas Glasgow, said the Institute was taking an innovative approach to research. "APHCRI will bring policy makers and researchers together in the early stages of the their work to refine research questions and improve the collaboration between the two diverse groups," he said.

"This aims to make research more relevant to policy formulation in primary health care."

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The new stream of research would be able to react quickly to relevant policy questions, with an end result of improving health care outcomes for Australians, he said.

APHCRI Research Advisory Board Chairman, Professor John Marley, congratulated the successful applicants.

"It's great to see so many researchers from all over Australia come together in this body of work. I look forward to seeing the results of their research and the development of APHCRI's approach, bringing the research and policy communities together."

Other projects funded include:

- A study of successful models of comprehensive primary health care in Australia and internationally;
- An investigation into primary care interventions for parents of overweight children; and
- Research into whether care in other chronic disease areas, like diabetes, could be used as a model in mental health