



Curtin University



Faculty of Health Sciences

2020 Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships

Strategic Project Profile

PROJECT TITLE: Quantifying the influence of aspects of continuity of primary care on quality, safety and low-value care in the Australian healthcare system

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1117

PROJECT SYNOPSIS: A strong and well-functioning primary care sector is key to delivering effective, efficient, timely and equitable care. For prevalent chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart failure and asthma, a shift in emphasis from acute to primary care has the potential to delay or prevent the onset of complications and reduce potentially avoidable emergency department presentations (ED) and hospitalisations. While a biologically plausible relationship exists between continuity of primary care and better health outcomes (usually articulated as reduced potentially preventable hospitalisations), the mechanisms by which continuity of care with a general practitioner (GP) achieves these outcomes are unknown. Further, the definition of 'continuity' is not clearly articulated and varies widely in the literature. This project will be the first to characterise and isolate the key features of continuity of primary care that best delivers effective services. The project will develop and use novel research concepts, approaches and methodologies to investigate the critical features of continuity of primary care from a GP that promote evidence-based care; reduce ineffective, wasteful or harmful care; reduce downstream healthcare costs and improve health outcomes.

This will be a retrospective longitudinal cohort study using, three pre-existing datasets currently held by the research team. The data include linked Commonwealth MBS and PBS claims data, comprehensive State Health person-level administrative data (i.e., hospital inpatient (public and private), ED presentations and pathology data) and general practice clinical consultation data from WA and NSW.

The project aims to operationalise indicators of evidence-based care and Choosing Wisely recommendations using administrative data. This will change the paradigm of how people measure the primary care system using these data. The study will develop previously unexplored approaches to solving a longstanding but important challenge, that of improving the effectiveness of the primary care sector in relation to chronic disease management. It will do so by creatively examining the concept of continuity from a new perspective, that of several inter-related but distinct facets. The project will be highly innovative by differentiating the impact of each of these facets on mediators of chronic disease management to produce findings that are more readily implementable into clinical practice and policy development.

WHAT MINIMAL ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS EXPECTED BY THE CANDIDATE BE COMPETITIVE:

- The PhD candidate will need strong statistical skills.
- First class or upper second class Honours in a relevant discipline.
- At least credit level passes in statistics, biostatistics or econometrics units at undergraduate level.
- Credit level passes in research methods/design units preferably with some epidemiological content.
- Previous experience with using statistical analysis software (preferably STATA).

Students are advised to contact the Project Lead listed below prior to submission of their scholarship application to discuss their suitability to be involved in this strategic project.

PROJECT LEAD CONTACT

NAME: Associate Professor Rachael Moorin, Faculty of Health Sciences

EMAIL: r.moorin@curtin.edu.au

CO-SUPERVISOR

NAME: Professor Mark Harris, Faculty of Health Sciences

EMAIL: Mark.Harris@curtin.edu.au

CO-SUPERVISOR

NAME: Professor Suzanne Robinson, Faculty of Health Sciences

EMAIL: suzanne.robinson@curtin.edu.au