
OCEAN Study: Examining multidisciplinary team-based care in general practice, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services

Participant Information Sheet: Practice Profile (Wave 1)

Background

Both the 10-year Primary Health Care Plan and the 2023 'Strengthening Medicare' Taskforce Report emphasised the need to support team-based care. In particular, the Strengthening Medicare taskforce recommended improving the supply of nurses and allied health professionals, increased investment in the Workforce Incentive Program to support multidisciplinary teams and increased commissioning of allied health and nursing services by Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to supplement general practice, Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) teams.

While research about general practice has predominantly focussed on the work of general practitioners, services in general practice, AMSs and ACCHSs are delivered by a range of health care professionals including general practice nurses (GPNs), nurse practitioners (NPs) and allied health professionals. Currently there is no mechanism to capture information about the patients who present to, or health problems that are managed by, these health care professionals. This means that there is no reliable information about the clinical activity of nurses and allied health professionals and their contribution to team-based care.

What is the study about? The project has several components, conducted in project 'waves':

- Identifying the characteristics of Australian general practices, AMSs, ACCHSs (Wave 1: Practice Profile).
- Identifying the qualifications, scope of practice, experience and skills of four (selected) health professional groups (Wave 2: Professional Profile):
 - General practice nurses
 - Nurse practitioners
 - Physiotherapists
 - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners
- Capturing data about the clinical activities undertaken during patient encounters with these selected groups of health professionals (Wave 3: Encounter data collection).

Participation in all waves of OCEAN is voluntary.

This information sheet is specifically about Wave 1 (the Practice Profile).

What is involved in Wave 1 (the *Practice Profile*)?

We ask that the Practice Manager or practice owner completes a questionnaire about the characteristics of this practice (e.g., the size, practice postcode, accreditation status, whether this is an AMS or ACCHS, your PHN, etc) and what other health services are co-located at the practice site. We expect that the questionnaire will take 15-30 minutes to complete, depending on the size of your practice. You do not need to complete the questionnaire immediately. You can log out of the OCEAN platform to complete it at a later time. The questionnaire works best if you enter the data on a computer or laptop, but you can also complete it on a tablet/iPad or mobile phone.

No information from the Practice Profile can be used by the study unless it has been submitted. Once you have submitted the Practice Profile you cannot make changes to the form, as information is de-identified on submission.

The Practice Profile survey will be repeated in late 2026. Your practice will be contacted to either complete the survey, or to review your previous answers to capture any changes that have occurred over the previous year (e.g., that the practice has increased or decreased in size).

Collecting contact details for your nursing workforce

Wave 2 of the OCEAN study is about examining the care provided by nurses, physiotherapists, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners working in Australian general practices, AMSs or ACCHSs. To be able to accurately and reliably examine the care they provide, the study team requires a representative sample of these health professionals. However, there is currently no complete list of these health professionals working in these settings.

This is why, after you submit the completed Practice Profile, you will be asked to provide the contact details (name, phone number and work email address or equivalent) for all nurses (GPNs and NPs) and physiotherapists engaged by the practice. In a future round of data collection (2026), we will ask for the details of any Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers or Health Practitioners engaged by the practice. We will then ask their permission to be contacted to extend an invite to participate in Wave 2 of the project where we will ask about their qualifications, skills and experience.

Once entered in the platform, these identifiable details will be stored separately from the rest of the Practice Profile data in an isolated Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) project we have called the 'locked box'. It is the research team's intention that the 'locked box' is never accessed by a human. Each health professional listed will then automatically receive an email released by the locked box with a request for consent to release their contact details to the research team. The email will contain two options – one to respond 'Yes' (consenting to be contacted) and another to respond 'No' (refusing consent to be contacted). If consent is refused, all details are automatically deleted from the locked box and are never released to the study team.

If consent is neither given nor denied within 2 weeks, a follow-up email will be sent to the relevant health professional. If consent is neither given nor denied within 4 weeks, the locked box will release the relevant contact details to the research team.

If health professionals agree to be contacted or their contact details are released after four weeks, they are under no obligation to participate in Wave 2. However, we ask that you support their participation and have included an information sheet to provide to your staff.

Which practices are eligible to take part in the study? All Australian general practices, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services can take part in Wave 1 of this study.

Who should complete the Wave 1 (*Practice Profile*) questionnaire? The survey questionnaire should be completed by the Practice Manager or practice owner.

Who is running the study? The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

At the University of Sydney -

- Dr Christopher Harrison, Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Public Health
- Dr Julie Gordon, Senior Lecturer, General Practice Clinical School
- Prof Sue Randall, Professor of Nursing (Rural and Remote/Primary Health Care), University Department of Rural Health
- Prof Sarah Dennis, Professor of Allied Health, Sydney School of Health Sciences
- Prof Roianne West, Professor of Nursing, Sydney Nursing School
- Dr Joan Henderson, Associate Professor of Primary Healthcare Research, Sydney School of Public Health
- Dr Yang Lu, Research Fellow, Sydney School of Public Health
- Dr Kate Milledge, Project Manager, Sydney School of Public Health
- Dr Michelle Hancock, Senior Program/Project Officer, Sydney School of Public Health
- Candace Angelo, Lecturer, Sydney School of Public Health
- Dr Ankur Kohar, Senior Data Analyst, Sydney School of Public Health
- Vanessa Kumar, Senior Data Analyst, Sydney School of Public Health
- Eric Tuchin, Research Officer, Sydney School of Public Health
- Mykah Alipio, Research Assistant, Sydney School of Public Health

At the University of Wollongong -

- Prof Elizabeth Halcomb, Professor of Primary Health Care Nursing, School of Nursing
- Dr Yu (Jason) Zhang, Software Engineer, School of Nursing
- Dr Ruth Mursa, Research Fellow, School of Nursing
- Asha Beattie, PhD Candidate, School of Nursing

At the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) -

- Karl Briscoe, CEO
- Jodie Dennis, Executive Director – Policy, Projects and Research
- Desiree Leha, Senior Policy Officer

Who is funding the study? The University of Sydney has been contracted by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) to conduct this study. Some members of the research team are staff members for NAATSIHWP, which may be perceived conflicts of interest. These relationships are disclosed and managed according to the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research to ensure the study's independence and integrity. There are no other potential or actual conflicts of interest for the researchers or institutions involved in the project. There are no financial benefits to the researchers or the Universities that might arise from this research.

Can I withdraw once I've started? Participating is optional, you do not have to take part. Your decision will have no impact on your current or future relationship with DHDA, the researchers, or anyone else at the University of Sydney, the University of Wollongong or NAATSIHWP. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you can withdraw by contacting our Project Manager prior to submitting the **Practice Profile form** (contact details below). Once you have submitted the Practice Profile you will be unable to make changes to the form, as information is de-identified on submission. If you wish to withdraw your data, you will need to contact the OCEAN team (contact details below).

Are there any risks or costs? Aside from your time, we do not foresee any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study. If at any point you feel uncomfortable you can stop participating, without needing to explain why. The study offers culturally safe options for support, feedback and withdrawal, including the option to speak with an Aboriginal team member (please see contact details below) or an independent support service:

- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- 13YARN: 13 92 76
- Or visit the website TEN – The Essential Network for Health Professionals [HERE](#)

Are there any benefits? Participating in this study means you will be contributing to our understanding about how general practices, AMSs, and ACCHSs currently function. Data from this study will be used to influence future policies relating to the models of care used in general practice in Australia, particularly those relating to multidisciplinary team care and practice incentives.

What will happen to information that is collected? OCEAN is an internet-based data collection tool. Information (such as the practice name, phone number, and email address) will be collected when you first log in and only used for corresponding with the practice about the study. This information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with others without your permission, except as required by law. It will be stored separately from any information you provide about your practice and colleagues. While the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is funding the study, they will not have access to any identifiable information about practices, participants or their work.

You can access your practice's account by logging into the website with your password. The OCEAN website is supported and maintained by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) department of the University of Sydney. The database is secured behind the University's firewall, and any user connection is safeguarded by Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) to ensure user data is transmitted securely to the server. Only members of the research team will have access to the information collected. Any publication of results will be in aggregated format only. No individual practice will be identifiable. The information will be stored and archived as prescribed by the State Records Authority of NSW.

The OCEAN team is committed to Indigenous Data Sovereignty, including the right of indigenous people to not only access their information, but also control this information. To ensure community control of data collected through OCEAN, the OCEAN Indigenous Data Sovereignty Group (IDSG) has been established to oversee the collection, analysis and interpretation of all Indigenous data collected. An Indigenous Advisory Board (IAB) will be established to provide localised Indigenous governance throughout the duration of the study. Finally, an Indigenous Data Governance Framework (IDGF) has been developed to detail the responsibilities and governance of Indigenous data.

Will I be told the results of the study? Results of the Wave 1 study will be collated and reported back to participating practices at the completion of this wave of the project.

What if I would like more information? If you would like more information about the study, or the OCEAN IDSG and IAB, or would like to access the Indigenous Data Governance Framework, you can call our free call line: 1800 2 62326 (1800 2 OCEAN) or email us at ocean.study@sydney.edu.au.

What if I have any complaints or concerns? The study has been approved by the below ethics committees according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)*. If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact:

Ethics Institution	Email	Phone number
University of Sydney (2024/HE001096)	human.ethics@sydney.edu.au	+61 2 8627 8176
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (REC-0462)	ethics@aiatsis.gov.au	+61 2 6246 1111

Next steps:

Having read the above information, you are now aware of:

- the purpose of the study, details of your involvement, including any risks or benefits
- how the study will be undertaken and the data collection process
- that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time
- how the data will be protected and used only for the purposes described above
- that the results of the study may be published, and that publications will not contain your name or any identifiable information about you or your colleagues.

If you have any questions or would like to speak to an Aboriginal team member, please contact:

OCEAN Project Manager: Dr Kate Milledge
Phone: 1800 262 326 (1800 2 OCEAN)
Email: ocean.study@sydney.edu.au

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We greatly appreciate your involvement.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Christopher Harrison & Dr Julie Gordon
Chief Investigators of the OCEAN project
Sydney School of Public Health
Free call: 1800 262 326 (1800 2 OCEAN)
Email: ocean.study@sydney.edu.au

(On behalf of the project Co-Investigators).

This information sheet is for you to keep

1. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023. Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/strengthening-medicare-taskforce-report>