

Do enhanced general practice services improve health outcomes and health service use? Flinders QUality Enhanced general practice Services Trial (Flinders QUEST)

Background

Flinders University has been funded by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (through the Commonwealth Department of Health) to conduct a methodologically rigorous randomised controlled trial (Flinders QUEST) to test whether Australian general practices that are assisted (logistically and financially) to deliver enhanced services produce better patient health outcomes and improved (cost effective) health service use.

Research Team

QUEST is being conducted by Professor Richard Reed (Discipline of General Practice, Flinders University), Professor Richard Osborne (Faculty of Health, Deakin University), Associate Professor Stephen Allison (College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University), Associate Professor Billingsley Kaambwa (College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University) and Dr Leigh Roeger (Discipline of General Practice, Flinders University - Trial Manager).

Rationale

Internationally there is emerging evidence that enhanced general practice services are associated with better patient health outcomes and improved health service use. Whether these research findings generalise to the Australian context is not known and nor is it clear which Australian patient cohorts might benefit most from these services.

Design

Pragmatic clustered randomised controlled trial with 1100 participants from 20 general practices. Practices will randomised to Control (10) and Intervention (10) arms. Practices in the Control arm will deliver general practice services as usual to QUEST trial participants. A control arm is being used in QUEST so that high level clinical evidence is produced from the trial.

Primary and Secondary Outcomes

Primary outcome – health status as measured by participant responses to the EQ-5D questionnaire. Secondary outcomes – secondary care (hospitalisations and Emergency Department presentations), referrals to radiology, pathology and other medical specialists, prescription drugs, health literacy and health care costs. Secondary outcome data will be collected from general practice and Medicare records.

Patient Cohort

Assessed (by the person's regular GP) as having high health care needs and possibly likely to benefit from the enhanced general practice services. Participants will be drawn from one of three cohorts: (1) Elderly people (aged 65 years and over); (2) Adults (aged 18 to 64 years) with two or more chronic conditions; (3) Children and young people (aged between 0 and 17 years).

Timelines

QUEST will be implemented during the 2018 and 2019 calendar years. Practices will be recruited January – February 2018 to enable participant recruitment beginning March 2018. Intervention arm practices will deliver the enhanced services over a 12 month period.

Enhanced Services

Intervention practices will provide QUEST participants with:

- (a) A formal link between the participant and their usual (preferred) GP
- (b) Access to longer GP appointments
- (c) Assertive follow-up after significant health events (within 7 days) and
- (d) Same day appointments for children / young people with acute conditions

Practice Support

Practices will be supported logistically and financially to participate in QUEST. All Practices will be paid a signing-on fee of \$10,000 (\$5,000 at baseline, \$5,000 at 12 months).

Practices allocated to the Intervention arm will be paid approximately \$1,000 per enrolled QUEST participant in three instalments (\$300 at baseline, \$300 at 6 months, \$400 at 12 months). A Flinders University Practice Facilitator will assist Intervention arm practices to deliver the enhanced services to a high standard.

The number of patients per GP to be recruited will depend on the overall number of GPs taking part in QUEST. For example if the 20 practices have in total 100 QUEST GPs this will equate to 11 patients per GP.

All practices will be reimbursed for the costs of materials (e.g., stationery, postage) utilised in participating in QUEST.

Trial Registration

The trial registration number is ACTRN 12617001589370p. The registration can be viewed at the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry: <http://www.anzctr.org.au/>

Ethics Approval

Pending from the Southern Adelaide Clinical Human Research Ethics Committee (SAC HREC).

Website

<https://flindersquest.com.au/>

Further Details

Leigh Roeger
QUEST Trial Manager
08 7221 8532 / 0458 771 672
leigh.roeger@flinders.edu.au

Heilie Kwok
QUEST Study Coordinator
08 7221 8538 / 0413 622 589
heilie.kwok@flinders.edu.au

