

# Collaboratives

## An introduction to the Collaborative methodology for Divisions of General Practice.

*Collaboratives are a method of creating better ways to provide health care through shared learning, peer support, training, education and support systems, and a team approach with GPs in a clinical leadership role.*

*Collaborative methodology does not just mean working together “collaboratively” on a project – but rather is a specific quality improvement methodology that can be applied within a practice to achieve rapid, positive change in practice and patient outcomes.*

### Introduction

The Federal Government is in the process of deciding who will implement and manage the first two years of the Australian Primary Care Collaboratives Program.

Funded under the Focus on Prevention initiative from the 2003 Budget, the initial program will focus on diabetes and cardiovascular disease. ADGP, as part of a consortium of four organisations, has made a bid on behalf of the Divisions Network for this program.

International experience has shown that the Collaborative methodology creates practical capacity-development tools for improving practice and raising quality. It exposes people to techniques applicable to any problem.

### What is a Collaborative?

Collaboratives are an improvement method which:

- relies on spread and adaptation
- of existing knowledge
- to multiple settings
- to accomplish a common aim

A Collaborative brings together groups of health care practitioners and practices to work together through shared learning and support systems.

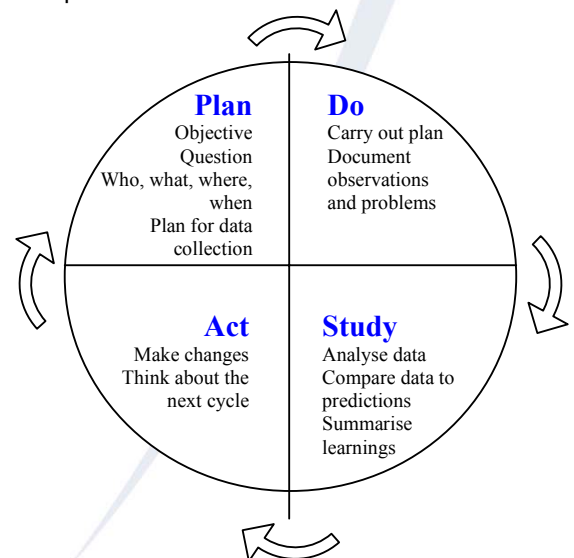
Participants apply changes that have been shown to lead to improvements in other practices - changes that are measurable which will generate improvements in their own practice.

Improvements are best achieved through a whole-of-practice approach.

### How does it work?

A Collaborative is based on the quality improvement principles of Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA). It uses rapid cycles of testing and measuring the effects of small change ideas to drive and build sustainable improvements.

This promotes a culture of continuous quality improvement.



### Repeated Use of the Cycle

- Repeating the cycle means gradual improvement while gathering data
- Small incremental changes are easier, each cycle builds on previous learnings
- Improvements can be measured in hard data and in changes perceived by the people who use and deliver the services

## The Process

A Collaborative consists of a series of learning workshops, informal meetings and communications.

These are interspersed with action periods during which participants' progress is measured and shared.

1. The topic is selected: e.g. improving diabetes care, improving care of people with hypertension, reducing cardiovascular mortality, increasing access to mental health care.
2. A planning group is convened from key experts who identify what changes are to be achieved and how they are to be measured e.g. to improve diabetes care through HbA1C, foot care, eye care.
3. Key people from practice, usually more than one (GP and other staff), attend workshops to share ideas and share successes.

***In Australia at a practical level people are busy just trying to cope with what's happening from day to day. It is often a trial and error approach.***

***At a broader level, getting evidence into practice through formal research, modelling and pilots takes time.***

***Collaboratives are about combining the two methods to achieve ongoing improvements quickly.***

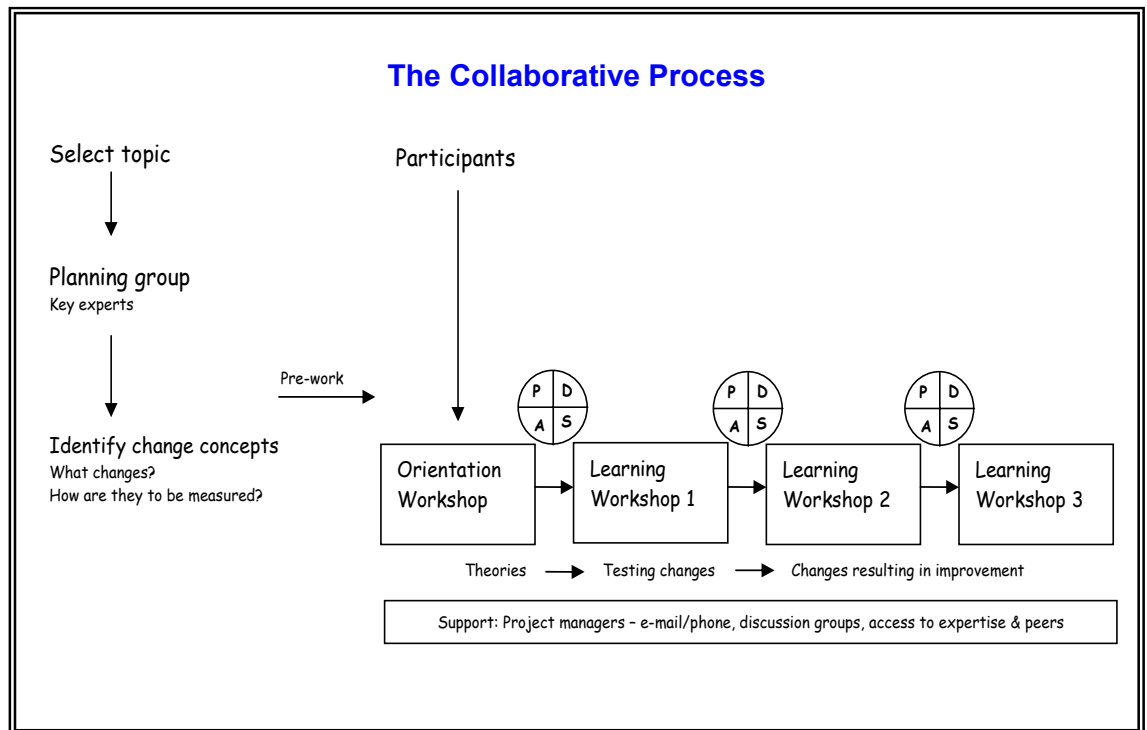
## Background

The Collaborative methodology was initially developed by the Institute of Healthcare Improvement in Boston, USA, in their Breakthrough Series in 1995 and has since been applied across a wide range of national and international health care systems.

The USA and the United Kingdom, along with several other countries, have successfully implemented Collaboratives in a number of areas. These include diabetes, asthma, depression, cardiovascular disease, cancer, prevention of surgical infection, end of life care, pneumonia and access to services in both tertiary and primary care settings.

### Further Information

Further information on Collaboratives can be obtained from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement website <http://www.ihl.org> or the UK National Primary Care Development Team website <http://www.npdt.org>.



## Contact ADGP

Australian Divisions of General Practice  
Minter Ellison Building  
25 National Circuit, FORREST ACT 2603  
PO Box 4308, MANUKA ACT 2603  
Ph 02 6228 0800, Fax 02 6228 0899  
Email [reception@adgp.com.au](mailto:reception@adgp.com.au), [www.adgp.com.au](http://www.adgp.com.au)