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News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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GP nursing survey reveals up-and-coming profession

The first ever comprehensive national survey on nurses in general practice has highlighted the rapid growth of the workforce, with almost one third of nurses in GP surgeries being employed for less than two years.

The National Practice Nurse Workforce Survey 2003, undertaken by the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP), gives a picture of a predominantly female workforce of mainly registered nurses, many of whom have more than one part-time nursing job.

ADGP's Principal Advisor Nursing in General Practice, Julie Porritt, said the survey was completed by 70 per cent of the 120 Divisions of General Practice in Australia (representing 53 per cent of general practices nationally), as well as by more than 1,400 GP practices and 1,963 individual nurses.

Preliminary findings include:

- 84 per cent of nurses employed in general practice are registered nurses, while 16 per cent are enrolled nurses
- Consistent with the nursing profession as a whole, general practice nurses are an ageing workforce, with 73 per cent over 40 years of age
- The workforce is predominantly female with less than two per cent males
- 84 per cent of general practice nurses work part time
- Almost one third of the general practice nurse workforce is employed in another job
- Almost one third of nurses have been employed in general practice for less than two years
- 46 per cent of general practice nurses report that they hold an additional nursing qualification, most frequently in midwifery, as an accredited nurse immunizer, or asthma educator

Divisions surveyed reported that 60 per cent of practices do not employ a general practice nurse.

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters said given the growing general practice nurse workforce, it was important that government incentives to support the employment of practice nurses were available across the board.

"The fact is general practitioners are under pressure in all regions and general practice nurses are becoming an increasingly important part of the team in doctors' surgeries across Australia, assisting GPs to maintain high standards of care," he said.

"As specially-skilled professionals, nurses can often enhance the care patients receive when they visit the GP and this has now been recognised by the Federal Government in allowing a charge to be raised for a limited number of the tasks general practice nurses carry out.

"ADGP continues to lobby for the extension of the Practice Nurse Incentive Payment to all general practices."

For comment:

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