

# What GPs themselves say

“There is no doubt in my mind that my patients not only enjoy the added professional input contributing to their care but more importantly, they benefit with better ongoing medical and preventative care. I would recommend any General Practitioner to avail the support provided by a registered nurse to themselves and their patients.” GP#1

“We couldn’t cope with our workload without our practice nurse.” GP#2

“Practice Nurses add a whole other dimension to our practice and we rely on them all the time.” GP#3

“This has been a positive collaboration with the nurse relieving me of many time consuming tasks, adding positively to the practice bottom line and, by bringing a whole set of complementary skills to mine, enhancing the services we are able to provide.” GP#4

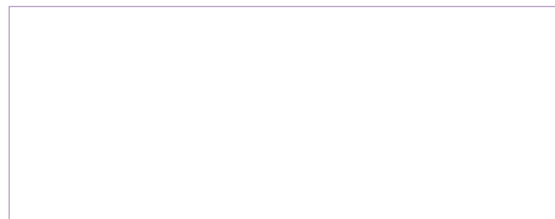


Prepared by the  
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*Promoting community health and wellbeing through  
the General Practice Network and primary care teams.*

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# Nursing in General Practice



Information for general practice

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Over 57 percent of general practices in Australia now employ at least one practice nurse. Like other countries such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, Australia has recognised the important role for practice nurses in enhancing the health care services provided by general practitioners, particularly where the nurse's role is targeted to health priority areas such as chronic disease management.

## How a practice nurse adds value

Nurses are highly skilled and knowledgeable health professionals, who work collaboratively with the general practitioner and other members of the practice team, to provide safe and quality care. Recognised benefits nurses can bring to primary care services include:

- improved outcomes in chronic disease
- reduction in waiting times
- improved public access
- improved integration with the acute sector
- enhanced patient satisfaction
- an increase in the range of services available at the practice.

The roles for nurses in general practice are extensive and can vary from practice to practice depending on patient needs, the skills and experience of the nurse, and the roles designated by GPs.

Some of the common duties undertaken by nurses in general practice include: triage, health assessments, wound management, immunisation, first aid, administering medications, blood collection, taking patient histories, care planning and reminder and recall of patients. Many nurses are also involved in patient education and monitoring for diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Some nurses undertake women's health checks including Pap Smears.

Nurses can also play a key role in coordinating patient care, liaising with community groups, and helping patients to navigate the health system.



## Other benefits

- Improved work satisfaction for the GP.
- Additional support for the GP.
- Increased capacity for the practice to adapt to change.
- Improvements in quality of care to patients.
- Additional inducement to recruit new GPs.
- Increased income for the practice.

## Financial initiatives

The Australian Government has introduced several financial incentives to help general practice to employ or retain the services of a nurse. These include:

### ■ Practice Incentive Program (PIP) – Practice Nurse Payment

This PIP targets areas where patient access to medical services is limited, such as rural and remote communities and urban areas of workforce shortage.

### ■ MBS Items for practice nurse services

A range of MBS items are available for services provided by a nurse for and on behalf of a GP. These include immunisation, wound management, and Pap smears (RRMA 3-7). Further items planned to be introduced into the Schedule in November 2006 include preventative health checks for women (RRMA 3-7) and antenatal checks (RRMA 3-7), and in May 2007 chronic disease support.

### ■ Chronic Disease Management and Enhanced Primary Care

Practice nurses are able to assist general practitioners with health assessments and chronic disease management services including, Asthma Management Plans, Diabetes Cycle of Care, GP Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements.