Title: Characteristics of high performing general practices participating in the Primary Care Collaborative (APCC) Program

Authors: Dale Ford¹,², Amr Abou Elnour², Andrea Hernan², Julie Johnson³, Jeffery Fuller⁴ and James A Dunbar²

Affiliation: 1 Improvement Foundation Australia (IFA)  
2 Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural Health (GGT UDRH) Flinders University and Deakin University  
3 The Centre for Clinical Governance Research at the University of New South Wales  
4 School of Nursing & Midwifery and Centre of Research Excellence in Primary Health Care Microsystems, Flinders University

Introduction
General practice is the front-line unit of the healthcare system. Safe and high quality practice has been a focus of research since the release of Err is Human, Crossing the Quality Chasm and An Organisation with a Memory. The main aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of high performing Australian general practices participating in the Primary Care Collaborative (APCC) Program which is the Australian national program for improving quality in general practice.

Method
We identified a national sample of high performing Australian general practices based on: a) performance in Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL) and Australian Primary Care Collaborative (APCC) Program databases, b) national award winners, c) nomination by experts. Semi-structured face to face interviews were undertaken. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed.

Results
We conducted interviews in 22 practices representing all Australian states and territories. Fifty three participants took part in interviews: 19 general practitioners, 18 practice managers, 15 practice nurses and 1 community pharmacist. The characteristics of these practices varied by size, accreditation, awards and involvement in teaching and research. The main themes which emerged are team dynamics, APCC Program participation, accreditation, practice nurse role, patient safety, IT, patient involvement, leadership and culture. Also, participants identified areas which need improvement such as Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) and the role of Medicare Locals.

Conclusion
We identified the characteristics of high performing Australian general practices. Most of them are related to improvement in quality and patient safety. Our findings concurred with the most of clinical microsystem criteria described in Quality by Design and stressed the clinical risk management. Most of the participants agreed that these characteristics are generalisable among Australian general practices.