ABSTRACT: The perceived enablers and barriers for the uptake, utilisation, sustainability and spread of Primary Health Care Collaboratives in Australia

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Background: Collaborative programs have been very successful in improving the quality and safety of patient care within General Practices in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. There is evidence to suggest that possible enablers for successful Collaboratives include good team dynamics, strong leadership and adequate access to funding and resources especially for protected time. Possible barriers include poor team dynamics, lack of resources and high workload. The outstanding problem is that these enablers and barriers have been typically described within a series of individual studies that have used different methodologies and that have focused on a small number of themes such as uptake or utilisation. No single study has explored the perceived enablers and barriers across a comprehensive suite of themes which include uptake, utilisation, sustainability and spread, as well as considering external influences such as the impact of program support staff.

Rationale for Study: The rationale of the study is to improve our understanding of how primary health care Collaboratives are accessed (uptake), how they are implemented and employed (utilisation), how improvements are maintained (sustainability), how we can promote the uptake of Collaboratives to other General Practices (spread).

Methods: A qualitative study is being conducted using individual face-to-face interviews with members of General Practices consisting of General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Practice Managers, and also key informants who are instrumental in the success of the Collaborative program such as Collaborative Program Managers, the National Program Director, and the Principal Clinical Advisor. In addition, a small group of General Practices that were invited but did not participate in the Collaborative program will also be interviewed. The interview questions will be specifically designed to elicit responses on the four different themes of uptake, utilisation, sustainability, and spread.

Results: It is predicted that the enablers and barriers for successful Collaboratives will compliment but extend the previous literature. In addition, it is also predicted that the perceived enablers and barriers may be influenced by the demographic and structural characteristics of the practices (i.e., rural vs. urban location or size of the practice) and possibly the discipline and the role of the person being interviewed.

Discussion: The methodology will be discussed along with the definition of 'uptake', 'utilisation', 'sustainability' and 'spread' – terms that should arguably be standardised in qualitative studies of this nature.