

Editorial

Masterclasses in Primary Health Care Research

In this issue of *Primary Health Care Research and Development* we are launching a new section of the Journal: Masterclass Papers. In this section we will be publishing invited papers from leaders in primary health care research, including keynote papers presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society of Academic Primary Care. The papers will provide analysis of research in a particular field, identifying progress, development, translation into practice, questions that are being addressed and questions that remain. The papers will thus provide an overview of the achievement of primary health care research in particular fields.

In 1997 David Mant, in his report on the state of primary health care research in the UK, made the observations that there was a dearth of primary health care research, that much research used in primary care had been undertaken in secondary care settings, that there was a lack of funding in the area and a lack of development of research capacity amongst primary health care practitioners (NHS Executive, 1997). Now, just over a decade later, there have been significant developments in all of these areas. This series of papers will both celebrate the growth in primary health care research and provide a challenge to current and future researchers to continue the momentum to extend this knowledge to enable higher quality care, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care, for individuals in their homes and communities.

Over the past decades there has been significant growth in capacity building in primary

health care research that has led to an increase in research and development in a wide range of areas. Internationally examples of research foci for primary health research include NIVEL, the Dutch Institute for Health Services Research, which has had a long history of research in primary health care; NAPRAG, The North American Research Group has, since 1972, been supporting and stimulating multidisciplinary primary care research through network activities while, more recently, organisations such as the Australian Primary Health Care Research and Information Service, have been established. In the UK, the formation of the National Primary Care Research and Development Centre at the Universities of Manchester and York, The Scottish School for Primary Care and, more recently, The National Institute for Health Research School for Primary Care in England, all provide contexts for conduct of primary health care research of the highest quality. The translation of the research from these organisations into practice has been aided by the work of organisations such as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in England and Wales.

However, these activities may be seen as just a beginning in providing the evidence base to tackle the huge international primary health care issues. In the World Health Organization Report: *Primary Health Care Now More Than Ever* the writers focus on the need for research driven policy reform in primary health care: ‘There is a huge research agenda with enormous potential to accelerate PHC reforms that requires more concerted attention ...’ (World Health Organization, 2008, p. 109). The case is made that investment in research into what works best in primary health care is still woefully low, less than 0.1% of health expenditure in the USA, for example. ‘No other

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US\$5 trillion economic sector would be happy with so little investment in research related to its core agenda: the reduction of health inequalities; the organization of people-centred care; and the development of better, more effective public policies... It is time for health leaders to understand the value of investment in this area.' (World Health Organization, 2009, p. 110).

The Masterclass Paper Series aims to contribute to furthering this research agenda and provide a forum for the dissemination of key papers in primary health care research. In this issue we launch the Series with a paper by Professor Anne Rogers: 'Advancing the Expert Patient?' which was presented at the Society of Academic Primary Care Annual Scientific Meeting in Galway in 2008. In this paper Professor Rogers provides a challenging critique of current policy concerning lay involvement in health care and proposes a new research agenda concerning understanding the lives and illness work under-

taken by people living with a long-term health condition.

Future issues of the Journal will include Masterclass papers from leading primary health care researchers. Over the years this Series will provide a benchmark for research in primary health care. We hope that all primary health care researchers will aspire to publish in this series!

Rosamund Bryar and Sally Kendall

Editors in Chief

Primary Health Care Research and Development

References

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- World Health Organization.** 2008: *Primary Health Care Now More Than Ever.* The World Health Report 2008. Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved 7 June 2009 from www.who.int/whr/2008/whr08_en.pdf