

**INFORMATION SHEET
FOR DOCTORS AND STAFF**

What is the practice visit for?

Over the last 18 months the RACGP has developed a set of EnM Standards for General Practice. These have been developed by a College working party for use in an accreditation system.

The standards cannot be fully developed without consideration of how they may be measured or assessed. These field test visits will assist the working party in ensuring that the standards can be measured in all types of practices.

In addition, the visits will provide the working party with valuable feedback on the standards themselves. This will help the working party to ensure the standards are fair and appropriate.

What do we have to do?

Participation in the field testing will involve:

- (i) the practice assessing itself against the standards (before the practice visit);
- (ii) completion of some brief questionnaires prior to and after the visit;
- (iii) being visited by two GPs (surveyors) who will assess the practice against the standards; and
- (iv) an optional patient survey.

Who is going to visit the practice?

The practice will be visited by two doctors who have been trained as surveyors. On some occasions the surveyors may be accompanied by a researcher from the RACGP Standards Development Unit.

What will happen on the day of the visit?

The two surveyors will visit your practice on a day and time convenient to you. They will conduct the visit in three stages - an interview stage, an observation stage and an assessment stage. The first two stages involve data collection, while the third stage involves analysis of the data and assessment of the practice.

The first stage (interview) provides two main sources of data about the practice:

(i) **Doctor interview(s):** an interview with the 'principal' GP in the practice. This interview, taking about an hour, covers all aspects of the standards document. Other doctors, if any, are then interviewed, usually for about 15 minutes each. These shorter interviews concentrate on specific aspects of the standards.

(ii) **Staff interview(s):** all staff in the practice are interviewed. In practices with only one member of staff the interview will last 15-20 minutes. In larger practices it may not be necessary to interview every member of staff. In practices where staff specialise (eg receptionist, practice manager, nurse) the interviews will be shorter (around 5-10 minutes).

The second stage of the visit, practice observation, involves four sources of data:

(i) **Medical record review:** an examination of 25-30 medical records, chosen at random by the surveyors. (ii) **Appointments schedule review:** an examination of the practice's appointments schedule.

(iii) **Documents & other records:** an examination of any other practice-held records (eg copies of referral letters) that

you may choose to make available to surveyors. These documents and records would be used by the surveyors in their assessment.

(iv) **Direct observation:** general observation of the practice, its facilities and equipment.

During the third stage of the visit (assessment) the surveyors will use the information they have collected to determine the extent to which each of the criteria in the standards document has been met. In some cases this will be done off-site to allow the practice to resume normal operation.

How long will the visit take?

As a rough guide, the visit will take 3 hours plus a half hour for each doctor in the practice. Therefore a visit to a solo practice will take about 3 1/2 hours, while a visit to a larger practice (e.g. 4 doctors) will take around 5 hours. (These times may be considered the upper limit - if the practice is well prepared the visits may be shorter).

Who determines the actual schedule on the day?

While we have a preferred order for doing things we understand that it may be more convenient for the practice if the schedule is changed. Ultimately, the schedule will be whatever best suits the practice. We will fit in with you.

Are we being tested?

The purpose of the practice visit is not so much to make judgements about the practices we visit but to test ourselves. We want to know if the standards can be assessed and whether they are appropriate for general practice. When being interviewed, it is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers - we just want to learn more about the practice.

How were we chosen?

Your practice was selected as one of a random sample of 200 general practitioners throughout Australia.

What will happen to the results of the field test?

All information collected about practices involved in the field test will remain strictly confidential. This guarantee of confidentiality is backed by declaration of the field test under Commonwealth Quality Assurance Legislation (Part VC of the Health Insurance Act 1973). This means that no information about your practice can be released by the field testing project to any individual or Organisation under any circumstances.

While the results of the field test will ultimately be published, only non-identifying information will be included in the findings.

What is the optional patient survey?

One of the assessment measures to be explored during the field testing is a patient survey. Many of the criteria can be more easily assessed when the views of patients are considered.

Patients are in a unique position to give feedback about general practices. The patient survey will measure their opinions on many aspects of the practice including preventive care, accessibility and the day to day running of the practice.

Practices agreeing to participate in the field testing program are strongly encouraged to also participate in the patient survey.

The patient survey to be used will be identical to that offered by the QA&CE Programme. It has been developed and validated over a number of years by Dr. Ian Steven, Director of the RACGP's Research and Health Promotion Unit in South Australia.

The survey is given to a number (this depends on the size of the practice) of consecutive patients attending the practice. The time commitment for practice staff in handing out and collecting the survey is minimal. Inconvenience to patients is also minimised by having them fill in the survey while they are waiting for the doctor.

Solo and two-doctor practices will survey 100 consecutive patients, three to five doctor practices will survey 200 consecutive patients, while larger practices will survey 300 consecutive patients.

The results of the survey will be processed by the RACGP Research and Health Promotion Unit. The results will be returned directly to you with a report comparing your practice with other practices. On the day of the practice visit these results should be made available to the surveyors.

How to prepare for your practice visit

You should complete and return your self-assessment as soon as possible.

If you agreed to do a patient survey this should also be completed and sent back for processing as soon as possible.

On the day of the visit...

- the doctor who has agreed to be the "principal" should have set aside one hour to be interviewed;

- other doctors (if any) should set aside 10-15 minutes each to be interviewed by the surveyors;

- 20-40 minutes, depending on the size of the practice, should be allowed for interviewing staff (for methodological reasons, practice doctors should not be present for the staff interviews);

- the surveyors will review a small random selection of medical records, examine your appointments book (if you have one) and look at various aspects of your practice including facilities and equipment.

One of the surveyors will contact you one week prior to the visit to confirm arrangements and answer any questions.

Important

Please ensure that all doctors and staff are aware of the field test visit and know what will be happening on the day.

Information for practice staff

The doctors in your practice have agreed to participate in the field testing of a set of standards for general practice. This will involve your practice being visited by two doctors (called surveyors) who will assess the practice against a set of draft standards developed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

It is important to stress that the main purpose of the visit is to test the standards (and the method of assessment) rather than make judgements about your practice. If a practice does not meet the standards it may well be the case that the standards need to be changed.

On the day of the visit the surveyors will interview all the doctors and look at the practice medical records, appointments schedule (if you keep one), and the facilities and equipment.

The surveyors will also interview all the practice staff. The purpose of these interviews is find out how the practice operates from the point of view of the staff. This will help us learn more about how different practices work around the country.

If you are the only staff member in a small practice you will be interviewed for about 20 minutes. If you are part of a larger team your interview may only take about 5 minutes.

You will be asked about the practice and what you do in it - what responsibilities you have, how you help patients, how the appointments system works etc.

The surveyors' questions are designed to cover many different types of practices. For this reason, you may be unable to answer some of the questions because they don't apply to your type of practice or because another staff member may be responsible for that part of the practice.

Don't worry! Remember we are testing our system of assessment as well as testing the standards.

During the day, the surveyors may also ask you to help them select some medical records or show them some of the practice equipment.

If you have any questions about the visit please contact one of the Standards Project staff at the RACGP on (02) 818 4366.