A28 - Practice nurse dementia education project
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BACKGROUND:
Following successful GP education programs in the Hunter region of NSW, there has been increasing recognition from GPs about the need for more formal evaluation of cognitive function in patients with possible early dementia. However, GPs express that time is a barrier to formal assessment during consultations and it might be best done by the practice nurse.

METHODS:
A research nurse educator with mental health expertise has been funded to provide education to practice nurses about the assessment of dementia. She is currently developing an education package which includes the following elements: recommended cognitive function and depression screening instruments, training/education pre- and post-evaluations, a checklist for recognising delirium, depression and dementia (3Ds), mentoring for practice nurses as they administer the test instruments to patients, evaluations for the use and outcomes from the cognitive testing instruments, and follow-up support phone calls and further support/mentoring as required.

RESULTS:
The education package will be demonstrated. To date, seven practice nurses from five practices have expressed interest in the package. Evaluation results from the training will be presented.

A dementia education package for practice nurses, to be delivered by an experienced mental health nurse educator, has been developed in the Hunter. The package has the potential to be used more widely.