A29 - Nurse practitioner project in the Hunter
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BACKGROUND:
The literature from overseas and our own research in Australia has demonstrated that general practitioners (GPs) fail to identify up to 50% of early dementia. Barriers include GP knowledge, system and patient/carer factors. In 2009-10 the DCRC funded two small projects to explore the potential role of a memory nurse in general practice to assist GPs to overcome these barriers and promote timely diagnosis. The model was developed using a participatory action approach and was well accepted by GPs.

METHODS:
Funding to further explore the role of nursing in dementia identification and management was obtained from the then Department of Health and Ageing under the Dementia Aged Care Models of Practice Nurse Practitioner program. Two nurse practitioners were employed to assess patients referred from

genral practice. The nurses conducted assessments in the home, wrote reports and in some cases conducted case conferences with the GPs about their findings.

RESULTS:
80 patients and 25 carers were assessed, referred by 36 GPs in the Hunter region from a total of 22 different general practices. Early evaluation results have found a high level of GP satisfaction with the project. GPs, patients and families have also reported satisfaction with the project. A total of 86% of patients and carers reported that they liked the service “a lot”. A total of 97% of patients and carers reported they would recommend the service to a friend or family.

The nurse practitioner in dementia project achieved a high satisfaction rating from GPs, patients and carers.