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Editorial

The importance of student paramedic contributions to pre-hospital research

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Welcome to the second annual student-focussed edition of the Australasian Journal of Paramedicine. As a precursor to the upcoming Student Paramedics Australasia conference in Melbourne, Victoria. This edition highlights the research that undergraduate students continue to contribute to the field of paramedic practice. As work continues in striving for professional recognition for paramedics and the field of paramedic practice, the contributions of undergraduate students in generating and disseminating pre-hospital-specific research represent an important facet of how professionalism is being defined, both now and into the future. To this end, this special edition showcases the work of Australian and New Zealand undergraduate paramedic students from the spectrum of universities delivering paramedic degree courses. The high volume and quality of papers submitted both to AJP and the Scientific Committee of Paramedics Australasia (PA) is a positive reflection of the willingness and capability of student paramedics to engage in and disseminate their work amongst their peers.

I would like to comment specifically on the quality of research produced by students and how this fits into the broader context of developing a body of evidence unique to the pre-hospital field. The nature of evidence, and specifically the hierarchy of evidence, is clearly defined within the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (1). At the peak is systematic review and meta-analysis, followed by randomised-controlled trials (RCT). There are a number of high quality RCT studies currently being conducted within Australian ambulance services, and these will continue to provide important evidence that will shape the management of patients, particularly those suffering cardiac arrest. However, it is also recognised that an underpinning feature of all high quality research are those studies that provide low-level evidence through case reports, literature reviews, and case series examinations of practice. The importance of continuing to question and challenge the nature of paramedic practice through smaller unfunded studies and reviews should not be understated, as it is through this work that larger questions, and inevitably studies, are able to be developed.

In this special edition we showcase contemporary student work from both Australia and New Zealand on a diverse range of topics from the investigation of wound irrigation and infection rates (2), the examination of changes to the mental health act and its implication for paramedics (3), contemplating the Resuscitative Endovascular Balloon Occlusion of the Aorta (REBOA) procedure and its potential for use in pre-hospital emergency care (4), and revisiting prehospital tourniquet use as a means of managing severe uncontrolled haemorrhage. (5)

The scholarly efforts published in this edition continue to contribute to the evidence base underpinning current paramedic practice, and also indicates the directions that future practice may take. Most importantly, this work enables the broader paramedic community to view those who provide vision and leadership for the future. The challenge remains to provide support and nurturing of this next generation of paramedic researcher to ensure that this comes to fruition. This must be pursued through all facets of paramedic practice; specifically by those serving as operational paramedics, industry leaders, and in the academic field. Continuing to nurture the development of a paramedic research agenda, facilitating the all-important resources to encourage and support research, enabling the dissemination of new knowledge, and understanding the implications for paramedic practice, are the key facets of providing a rich future for the paramedic field. Through these efforts we will ensure that future paramedics provide more substantive and patient-centred care based in evidence.

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