

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release



TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

Filling gaps in mental health care: Melbourne nurse awarded prestigious national Fellowship

Reducing the use of inappropriate seclusion in acute inpatient mental health care is the goal of Ms Bridget Hamilton, a Registered Nurse and Lecturer at the School of Nursing, University of Melbourne, who has just received a Fellowship from the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS).

Ms Hamilton, who works at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne, will use the NICS Fellowship to undertake a two-year implementation project that aims to address the gap between evidence supporting seclusion reduction and current nursing practice in some facilities.

Seclusion is intended as a last resort to reduce the risk of acutely aggressive patients harming themselves or others. However in 2004, 23 per cent of the 10,225 individuals admitted for acute hospital care in Victoria were secluded at an average of four seclusions per individual.

"There is growing evidence that seclusion may worsen the behaviours it is designed to contain, harm the therapeutic relationship between the staff and patient and increase the occurrence of injuries. There are also ethical problems for nursing staff involved in this practice," explains Ms Hamilton.

"I am implementing a seclusion reduction plan which includes engaging leaders to promote organizational change, using data to set improvement goals, staff training and consumer input."

NICS Chief Executive Officer, Dr Heather Buchan has welcomed this opportunity. "As Australia's national agency for closing gaps in health care, NICS is delighted to award this Fellowship to Ms Hamilton.

"This work will make an important contribution to improving the quality of care provided to people receiving treatment in our public mental health services," she said. "It can be a very difficult area and we applaud Ms Hamilton's efforts to get the best evidence relating to seclusion into practice."

Ms Hamilton will join five other health professionals from Victoria, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia in the NICS Fellowship program for 2007.

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Release ends.

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For more information about the NICS Fellowship Program : www.nicssl.com.au

Note to editors

The National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS), www.nicssl.com.au, is Australia's national agency for improving health care by helping close important gaps between best available evidence and current clinical practice. NICS is funded by the Australian Government. NICS will become an institute of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on 1 April 2007. As part of NICS' transfer to the NHMRC, the Commonwealth, as the member of NICS, has appointed a liquidator under the members' voluntary winding up provisions of the Corporations Act. This is the mechanism used to wind up a company that is able to pay its debts and meet its commitments. During the transfer, NICS' business operations will continue as normal. The NICS Fellowship program, which was launched in 2003, directly contributes to closing evidence-practice gaps by supporting health professionals to undertake practical projects that aim to improve health outcomes for people by getting high quality evidence into everyday clinical practice in particular health settings.

The two-year, part-time Fellowships are open to early- to mid-career health professionals across the health care spectrum, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, paramedics, health care managers, and policy makers.

The Fellowships provide an annual stipend as well as professional development opportunities, training programs in evidence implementation, mentorship, and opportunities to network with and learn from world-class experts who come to Australia as part of NICS' Visiting Experts program.

Applications for NICS Fellowships 2008 open at the end of April 2007.