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Dear Colleague

I am writing to alert you to an exciting new educational opportunity – the *Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses to Deliver Antenatal Services* and invite you to participate. Australian General Practice Network is assisting Royal College of Nursing, *Australia* (RCNA) with the recruitment of nurses into the program.

If you are a registered nurse, not only could you add a new dimension to your current practice, successfully completing the program will earn you continuing nurse education points with RCNA's Life Long Learning Program (3LP) and credit towards an articulated Graduate Diploma in Midwifery at Monash University. If you are a qualified midwife without 'recency of practice' you are encouraged to participate in the program.

As you would be aware, the Australian Government introduced a Medical Benefits Number (16400) late in 2006 for practice nurses to deliver an antenatal service for and on behalf of a general practitioner in rural and remote areas RRMA 3-7. Since then RCNA has taken the lead in ensuring that practice nurses are well prepared to provide appropriate and safe services to pregnant women using this item number. Working closely with an advisory group of health care professionals, a set of competencies has been developed for registered nurses who provide an antenatal service as part of their role in general practice.

Following on from this we recently commissioned a team, led by Professor Karen Francis at Monash University's School of Nursing & Midwifery, to design, pilot and evaluate a program of education for practice nurses to prepare them to meet these competencies. Other members of this team are Dr Jane Mills, Dr Melanie Birks, Ms Maureen Miles and Ms Jan Jones.

This letter invites you to participate in both the pilot *Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses to Deliver Antenatal Services* and its associated evaluation study *Practice Nurses as Providers of Antenatal Services: A pilot project*. More information on the pilot program is provided below.

Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses

You will be required to discuss the opportunity to undertake the *Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses to Deliver Antenatal Services* and then provide antenatal services as part of the antenatal care delivered by the general practitioner/s, with your employer. Agreement between you, the general practitioner/s who will support you through the program, and support from your employer will need to be reached.

The program will be offered online and consists of four modules of study which equals 60 hours of theory. As well, you will have to organise a combined 80

hours of clinical placement with a midwife in a hospital, clinic or health centre and that which will need to be undertaken with a general practitioner. A minimum number of 40 hours must be spent with a midwife preceptor who will assess your clinical performance. The two midwives on the Monash Team, Maureen Miles and Jan Jones will be able to advise you and help to organise this.

The assessment requirements for the program are:

1. Clinical Placement Agreements and Completion of Reflective Clinical Log that records clinical skills assessments completed by the midwife preceptor, and
2. Development of a workplace policy relating to practice nurse delivery of antenatal services.

Commitment from general practice

A statement from the general practice in which you work will be required to support your enrolment in the education program including the completion of the assessment items. A commitment from the practice to support your involvement in the delivery of antenatal services to clients attending the practice after completion of the course is also required and should indicate the number of women with low risk pregnancies that normally attend the practice. The general practitioner will be required to participate in the education program and the program evaluation.

Financial support

Financial support is available to assist in meeting the cost of travel and accommodation required to undertake the clinical placement as part of the program. Financial support will be provided to practice nurses participating in the program and the general practice in which the practice nurse is employed. Financial support will be negotiated with each participant and general practice and include:

- Travel – to and from the site of clinical placement to a maximum of \$600 (may be by car or other means)
- Accommodation - if required to undertake clinical placement to a maximum of \$1500
- Textbook – recommended textbook provided
- Salary – contribution to maintenance of salary while undertaking program to a maximum of \$2800

Receipts and documentation will be required to claim support.

Program dates

The *Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses to Deliver Antenatal Services* will commence 4 August 2008. It is planned that assessment requirements of the program will be completed by 15 October 2008. On successful completion of the program, a certificate will be issued that the nurse has successfully completed the requirements of the program.

Evaluation

Practice Nurses as Providers of Antenatal Services: A pilot project.

If you decide to join the pilot program we strongly encourage you to elect to be a part of the evaluation study. Two areas will be evaluated; the processes involved in undertaking the program, and the outcomes for clients receiving an antenatal service from a competent practice nurse.

Practice nurse participants will be asked to complete a pre and post course questionnaire about participating in the program. We will also be asking the

general practitioner to complete pre and post program participation questionnaires. Participating in the evaluation study will mean that you will be asked to recruit some of your clients to the study so that we can find out about their experiences and views on practice nurse provided antenatal services. Once clients have completed two antenatal visits with you we hope they will complete an anonymous survey that you will pass on to them and which will be posted back to the research team in a supplied, stamped self-addressed envelope.

The research team would also like to interview up to a total of 14 clients about their experiences. For them to be able to do this, you will need to ask some of your clients if they would be willing to be interviewed over the telephone while at the same time giving them a supplied explanatory statement and consent form. If after they have read these documents, they are happy to be called you will need to pass on their contact details to the research team by email or phone.

Application process

To apply for participation in this program please:

1. Discuss with your employer and the general practitioner/s and request a letter of support.
2. Contact Ms Maureen Miles or Ms Jan Jones at Monash University on 03 5122 6454 or maureen.miles@med.monash.edu.au jan.jones@med.monash.edu.au to discuss your interest. Identify where you hope to undertake the clinical placements and the name and qualifications of staff involved. Assistance will be provided to negotiate the clinical placements if required.
3. Estimate financial support required and submit details to maureen.miles@med.monash.edu.au jan.jones@med.monash.edu.au.
4. Your application must be received by 18 July 2008.
5. If your application is accepted, your enrolment in the program will be confirmed and further information provided.

Nursing in general practice is recognized as the fastest developing area of our profession. It is exciting times with many opportunities and challenges to be taken up. I hope that you will consider participating in both the *Continuing Professional Development Program for Practice Nurses to Deliver Antenatal Services* and the evaluation study. If you have any questions I may be contacted on telephone number (02) 6283 3427.

I look forward to your involvement in the pilot program.

Yours sincerely



Kathleen McLaughlin
Director
Professional Services and Projects