Supervisor/S: Lynne Chepulis and Ross Lawrenson (WDHB)

Project Title: Exploring primary care services for adult patients newly diagnosed with diabetes

Field: Health

Division/School: HECS - School of Health

Project Location: Hamilton

Project Abstract:
Adult onset T2D is a lifelong condition that is usually diagnosed and managed in general practice. Currently it is estimated to affect approximately 250,000 in New Zealand (NZ), and 10-25% of DHB populations aged 65-74 years. Long term, T2D results in significant health outcomes including cardiovascular disease (CVD), peripheral vascular disease, renal disease, retinopathy and death, with the occurrence and severity of these comorbidities correlating strongly with worsening glycaemic control. In line with this, T2D also places a financial burden on health services in NZ as patients with diabetes are twice as likely to be hospitalised as patients without diabetes. As such, T2D leads to an increased demand for hospital services including higher admission rates for stroke and renal dialysis.

Importantly, diabetes also results in some of the most significant inequities for Māori and Pasifika: T2D develops at a younger age and is associated with poorer outcomes. Much of this has been attributed to the lower level of primary care engagement that some of these patients receive but it has also been shown that Māori receive lower rates of diabetes medication prescribing and reduced initiation of new diabetes therapies.

Research has suggested that these poor outcomes may be due to reduced health literacy and insufficient knowledge of disease management by patients, with other studies showing that diabetes education and support is crucial for newly diagnosed patients to improve longer-term outcomes. Indeed, we suggest that equipping newly diagnosed T2D patients with the knowledge and resources that they need to manage their disease from the outset is essential if we are to be able to turn the tide of an increasing prevalence of diabetes complications in NZ.

Thus, the aim of this project is to evaluate the patient view of access and provision of resources to support diabetes management following diagnosis.

Student Skills:
- Knowledge of diabetes and the health context in NZ
- Confidence to approach and work with patients and GP practice staff
- Some knowledge of qualitative research methodologies
- Cultural awareness and ability to appropriately engage with Maori patients
- Good computer skills

Project Tasks:
- Contact primary care practices (with ethics consent) to obtain lists of patients with newly diagnosed patients
- Work with practice staff to contact these patients to ask about participating in a qualitative interview about their experiences
- Conduct 10-14 patient interviews
- Transcribe and analyse findings from these interviews
- Support the write up of these findings for publication

Expected Outcomes:
- Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
- A publication in a peer reviewed journal
- A report back to the practice(s) or PHO