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MEDIA RELEASE

Nurse funding initiative for general practice – a great opportunity for improvement in patient care and outcomes

The Improvement Foundation (IF) believes that plans to fund a practice nurse in every health service, as announced in yesterday's federal budget, will improve health outcomes for patients, particularly those with a chronic disease, if combined with the appropriate training, support and community involvement.

The IF have been working with health services through the Australian Primary Care Collaboratives (APCC) Program for more than 5 years to improve their health systems, and a team-based care approach is a key feature of the Program.

"We work with health services that have had great success treating patients with chronic disease using a team-based approach" says Dr Dale Ford, IF Principal Clinical Advisor. He explains, "A team-based approach, particularly one which incorporates a practice nurse, leads to significant improvements within the practice, including increased flexibility, improving patient care, as well as improving the quality of life for GPs and their staff.

Practices who have improved their patient clinical outcomes through working with IF and the APCC Program have, overall, increased the number of Practice Nurses in their Practices. Examples of ways in which health services have utilised their practice nurse/s to meet patients needs include:

- coordinating chronic disease management in the health service
- coordinating nurse led clinics
- doing pap smears and giving normal pathology results
- taking routine blood pressures, BMIs, urinalysis, phlebotomy
- performing wound management & vaccinations
- coordinating GP management plans and team care arrangements (and reviews)
- using patient data management to drive forward improvement in the health service
- enhancing practice capacity

END