Due to the infancy of practice nursing, minimal interest, funding, recognition or expertise is apparent. If nursing within general practice is to progress research needs to be high on the agenda for governments, academic institutions, general practices and more importantly practice nurses.

To be an effective professional member of the health care team the nurse must base their practice within a systematic, evidence-based framework. Formal education and the support from professional organisations are important foundations of this professional role. If the practice nurse role is to evolve from task delegation to independent practitioner, we must all be able to demonstrate with evidence that we can provide to our patients positive health outcomes in an environment of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

In 2006, the University of Melbourne awarded several nursing Research Fellowships under the auspice of Primary Health Care Research and Development (PHCRED) and the Department of General Practice. This opportunity has enabled the research fellows to work within a ‘research rich’ academic general practice environment. From here we have learnt the value of research skills, the process of developing and answering a research question and fostering an ongoing interest in research.

The Fellowship has provided us with an in depth understanding of the research agenda, the terminology and the relevance to our daily practice. Furthermore, we now realise the potential scope of research that is possible for practice nurses to instigate or participate in whether it be a small project or national nursing centred research project. The Fellowship has also provided an opportunity for us to network with nurse leaders who are active in research and to see the importance of the disseminating research findings. Whether we choose to become researchers or not will be for the future to decide, but the experience of being exposed to this most essential part of practice nursing development has been a worthwhile and valuable experience and one that we would highly recommend to other practice nurses.