What is the PARTNER Network?

The PARTNER Network is a national rural practice-based research network (PBRN) of rural general practices and a related database. Together this will create a clinical trial development and participation resource for:

- Rural Australians
- Rural primary health care professionals
- Researchers and investigators.

By 2026, the goal is to create a national network of 90 rural general practices.

Who is leading the PARTNER Network?

PARTNER is spearheaded by a dedicated network of internationally recognised academic GPs and primary care experts focused on enabling rural primary care to develop and conduct trials.

- Prof Jon Emery (University of Melbourne)
- A/Prof David Gonzalez-Chica (University of Adelaide)
- A/Prof Andrew Kirke (University of Western Australia)
- Prof Jan Radford (University of Tasmania)
- Dr Zoe Schofield (Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia)
- Prof Nigel Stocks (University of Adelaide)
- Prof Katharine Wallis (University of Queensland)

Who is funding the PARTNER Network?

The PARTNER Network is part of the Australian Teletrial Program, funded by the Australian Government under the Medical Research Future Fund, National Critical Infrastructure Initiative, 2019 Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure grant.

What will the PARTNER Network do?

The PARTNER Network creates an environment of research-ready GP practices that improves the speed and quality of research conducted in primary care, and allows patients in regional, rural, or remote locations equity in access to clinical trials and improved health outcomes.

The PARTNER Network will:

- Connect rural Australians to clinical trials through their local general practice
- Create research-ready rural general practices that improve the speed and quality of research
- Improve general practice skill and capacity to develop and conduct rural practice-based research
- Support trials that are relevant to the needs to rural Australians
- Identify eligible patients for specific trials, making trial recruitment more efficient

What are the benefits of participating?

The PARTNER Network provides many benefits to your practice, your staff, and patients.

- **Improved patient outcome:** Patients in clinical trials often have better outcomes regardless of whether they are in the intervention or control group.
- **Be part of research:** Improve clinical practice and patient outcomes through needed primary care clinical trials and teletrials. The 'secondary' use of de-identified patient data decreases the burden and cost of collecting new data for research.
- **Ongoing education and continuing development activities:** Your practice team will be trained in the conduct of clinical trials.
- **Early exposure to new medicines, devices and models of care**
- **Generate your own research questions and projects:** To participate and contribute to the development of new research that is important to you and meets the clinical needs of your community.
- **Patients like clinical trials:** They have increased access to specialists and can meaningfully contribute to research that helps people with similar conditions.
- **Opportunities for income:** $2000 sign-up amount for each practice, and opportunities to participate in paid clinical trials.

$2000 payment for sign-up, covering installation of GRHANITE® ($1000) and Torch Recruit™ ($1000). Further payments will be considered for PARTNER Network involvement. Some clinical trials will provided further payment.

Practice eligibility

Participating general practices must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Located in rural or regional area categorised by the Modified Monash Model as MMM3-7.
- Practice clinical software is either Best Practice, Medical Director or Zedmed (not cloud-based or a shared server) and the Edge or Chrome browser is available.
- Have available a PC with Windows 10 or above.
- Stable Internet or NBN connection.

Australian Teletrial Program
Access to clinical trials, closer to home

www.partnernetwork.com.au

PARTNER

INFORMATION FOR GENERAL PRACTICES

Your practice is being invited to the PARTNER Network. Please take time to read this information and ask questions about the research program. Please ensure that you understand what is involved in participation and discuss with other practice members before consenting to take part.

What is involved in taking part in the PARTNER Network?

If you agree to participate, the following will happen:

1. The PARTNER Network State Coordinator will go through the information and agreements that need signing. These include:
   a. A PARTNER Network consent to participate form
   b. An agreement for the provision of data via GRHANITE to Patron.
   c. An agreement with Torch Recruit™
2. The PARTNER Network State Coordinator will arrange to install two pieces of software on a computer at your practice.
   a. **Torch Recruit™** The University of Melbourne will use Torch Recruit™ software to identify the number patients eligible for specific clinical trials, by using electronic medical record data. No patient-level data leaves the practice.
   b. The data extraction tool, **GRHANITE®**. This University of Melbourne-developed software de-identifies data from the practice's electronic medical record before securely depositing it in the University-held Patron primary care data repository. It makes possible data-driven research to increase knowledge and improve healthcare practices and policy.
3. You will be invited to your local research network by your State Coordinator. This involves training and guidance in clinical trial participation and linking with other PARTNER Network general practices in your area.
4. You may also be contacted by your State Coordinator to participate in research studies. You are under no obligation to participate in these if you do not wish to.

How much time and effort is involved in clinical trials?

This varies, but you have a choice to participate in trials or not. If the trial appears too burdensome, you don't have to participate. As the PARTNER Network is run by GP-Academics, clinical trials will be vetted to ensure low burden on the general practice. Also, much of the trials work is done by researchers working with practice staff, e.g. calling patients, follow-up and surveys etc. And the software involved is efficient, providing data in the background. Finally, many clinical trials that are more involved will provide remuneration.

What kinds of clinical trials?

This varies widely, and trials will be vetted by the PARTNER Network. Some examples relate to diabetes case conferencing via telehealth, CVD decision support tool trials, or cancer prevention. Eventually, we would like to have GPs themselves involved in trial development.

What is Patron?

The PARTNER Network provides primary care data for research in an ethical and secure way.
Patron is a database of general practice data managed by The University of Melbourne (part of the PARTNER Network). Patron is part of the Data for Decisions initiative, at the Department of General Practice.

Patron makes possible primary care research projects to increase knowledge and improve healthcare practices and policy.

The Patron database consists of non-identifiable data extracted with permission from general practice electronic medical records. This data includes de-identified information about immunisations, medicines prescribed, illnesses, pathology and radiology results, measurements such as height, weight and blood pressure and lifestyle factors, such as alcohol intake and smoking habit.

What is the data used for?

The data will be used for research investigating medication safety, disease patterns, prescribing patterns, health economics and public health. These studies will provide useful information to health professionals and the wider community on diseases, the use of medications and the outcomes of disease or treatment and will also help to guide training of medical students. Studies may be undertaken by academic researchers, government bodies or commercial companies.

How will practices be informed on an on-going basis?

Your State Coordinator will be your main information source. A PARTNER Network website and the shall also inform general practice and consumers of activities related to the PARTNER Network and Patron.

Does GP, practice and patient data remain confidential?

Details of participating practices and GPs will remain confidential. The data extraction tool GRHANITE encrypts data prior to transmission from the practice to Patron and will render it non-identifiable to researchers. No practitioner or patient personal details are contained in the Patron database.

Findings from projects utilising data stored in Patron may be presented at national conferences and published in peer-reviewed journals or reports. All data will be in an anonymised and aggregated format, to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participating practices, GPs and their patients.

Commercial entities

Commercial entities may apply to access Patron data or may provide funding to researchers to undertake research. A condition of the latter is that researchers retain the right to publish research findings regardless of the outcome of the study.

How will data be protected?

Any Patron research data collected will be kept confidential subject to legal requirements and maintained in accordance with The University of Melbourne's Code of Conduct for Research. All Patron data is kept on secure servers curated by The University of Melbourne. All provided program-related information is kept secure, in locked storage at the Department of General Practice at The University of Melbourne, or on a password-protected server at the University of Melbourne.

The de-identified research data will be retained by the research team after the last publication of any data related to the Patron program of work, as per the NHMRC ethical guidelines, and then destroyed or deleted in keeping with Department of General Practice policy.

What are the consent options?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form and two legal agreements. The consent form provides the option to have your practice acknowledged on the PARTNER Network website. While you are encouraged to, you are under no obligation to participate in clinical trials if you do not wish to or are unable to.