

Australian Family Physician celebrates sixty years of publication

Stephen A Margolis

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. – Albert Einstein

Celebration!

This month we proudly salute the 60th birthday of the flagship scientific journal of Australian general practice. *Australian Family Physician (AFP)* was born in 1956 as the *Annals of General Practice*. This was a time of excitement as Australians celebrated a 'coming of age' and new-found independence. The first summer Olympics in the southern hemisphere, and first outside Europe or North America, arrived in Melbourne. Television transmission commenced.

General practitioners (GPs) in Australia and Britain in the 1950s sensed an opportune time to create a separate identity from other medical specialties. In 1951, Fraser Rose and John Hunt published a letter in the *British Medical Journal* outlining their proposal for the establishment of a college for GPs, a critical step in the creation of the College of General Practitioners in 1952.¹ With a significant number of Australians as members, state-based faculties of the British college were then established in Australia. In 1958 these joined together to create the Australian College of General Practitioners and, on receiving the royal charter in 1969, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

In the midst of the RACGP's foundation period, the first edition of the *Annals of General Practice* was released in September 1956 as a quarterly publication, with Dr Carl Gunther as inaugural editor. At the outset, it was noted that content 'will

be selected for their general practitioner interest'.² The first edition included clinical articles on congenital heart disease and infective hepatitis, as well as medical news. This quarterly publication expanded in size through the 1960s to over 50 pages per edition. By 1969, with the journal increasingly supporting the heart of Australian general practice, the RACGP moved to an expanded scope, content, page size and number of editions per year. This culminated in the birth of *AFP* in February 1972, with Dr Wes Fab as editor.

The name change reflected the worldwide momentum of the era for GPs to claim ownership of primary healthcare as a separate discipline from other branches of medicine. *AFP* expanded on *Annals of General Practice* with increased emphasis on original, scientific and educational content. The move was timely, with *AFP* able to support the arrival of the first formal training program for GPs, the Family Medicine Program, established through Australian Government funding in 1973.

Since then, *AFP* has moved from strength to strength as a strategic facilitator for the ongoing scientific development of general practice as a distinct medical specialty. In particular, *AFP* focuses on original material that considers the best international evidence and crystallises this information to be relevant and appropriate for the Australian context. *AFP* remains a major educational resource for primary healthcare at all levels of experience, providing contemporary information that helps contextualise important advances in our discipline. *AFP* continues to support and nurture general practice research by providing a key venue for publication and dissemination of findings, illustrated through a personal reflection by Winzenberg.³

Since its inception, a key guiding principle for *AFP* has been to support and improve the health and wellbeing of our patients. To illustrate some of the changes in contemporary practice that *AFP* has documented across the years, this month we include a paper from the Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) team that highlights aspects of this evolution.⁴ With the doctor–patient interaction a fundamental role in general practice, we include a paper by Stevens exploring the development of the medical gaze.⁵ Highlighting the change in practice logistics incorporating a decline in house calls by GPs, Dammery provides a historical perspective of the doctor's bag.⁶

Finally, the *AFP* team would like to thank our readership and enthusiasts across the decades. With your encouragement and support, we look forward to continuing to support the evolving face of Australian general practice in the decades to come.

Author

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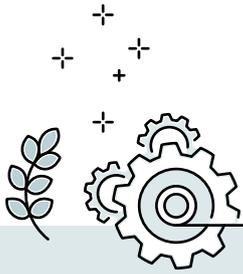
References

1. Rose FM, Hunt JH. College of general practice. *BMJ* 1951;2(4736):908.
2. Gunther C. A new venture. *Ann Gen Pract* 1956;1(1):2.
3. Winzenberg T. The role of *Australian Family Physician* in supporting general practice research – A personal perspective. *Aust Fam Physician* 2016;45:622–23.
4. Britt H, Miller GC, Valenti L, Henderson J, Bayram C, Gordon J. The changing face of Australian general practice across the decades. *Aust Fam Physician* 2016;45(9):628–31.
5. Stevens H. From medical gaze to statistical person: Historical reflections on evidence-based and personalised medicine. *Aust Fam Physician* 2016;45(9):632–35.
6. Dammery D. A historical account of the doctor's bag. *Aust Fam Physician* 2016;45(9):636–38.

Australian Family Physician

incorporating *Annals of General Practice*

1956–2016



1956

First issue of *Annals of General Practice*; black and white, digest (14 x 21 cm) size, produced via linotype. Subscription cost: two shillings and sixpence per part, or 10 shillings per year



1959

Reports first annual meeting of College, held 20 March



1961

Full colour plates introduced

1956



1962

Significant increase in volume and scope of advertising.

\$4.00



1966

Subscription cost after introduction of decimal currency: \$4 per year



1969

The College is granted the prefix 'Royal'



1971

Multiple choice questions first appear

1972

First issue of *Australian Family Physician (AFP)*; current standard journal size with two-tone cover. Introduces 'Checkpoint' quiz, precursor to 'Clinical Challenge'



1973

Becomes foundation member of National Medical Media Council (NMMC)



1976

Admitted to *Index Medicus*, forerunner of MEDLINE



1980

Revamp of cover, sporting a minimal 'futuristic' design

1981

Adopts Vancouver referencing system. Further redesign, featuring cover artwork



1990

RACGP adopts desktop publishing, *AFP* designed in-house. Circulation reaches 19,600



19,600

1991

'Research Notebook' introduced to highlight general practice research



1992

Two decades of *AFP* marked by reproducing papers from first issue with postscripts from original authors



1995

Now provides five opportunities for CME points via quizzes



1996

'Clinical Challenge' multiple choice quiz appears. Introduces 'Reason' research supplement, published twice a year



1986

1997

'Research Notebook' introduced to highlight general practice research



1997

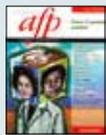
First *AFP* web page



2000

'Reason' supplement becomes section in its own right

2004



Redesign for more contemporary look. Clinical Challenge moves online. Achieves listing in Thomson Science Citation Index Expanded

2006

Adopts Manuscript Central/ScholarOne to manage submissions. Website upgraded, fully searchable and linked with PubMed



2007

Further redesign with new logo. Establishes International Advisory Panel, in addition to existing Editorial Board



2008

Joins Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)



2009

Achieves initial impact factor of 0.57. Awards first 'Best general practice research article' at GP09



2006

2012

AFP web page adapted for multiple devices, improved navigation and search; articles available in html and pdf. e-letters online correspondence introduced



2014

Circulation peaks at 43,666



2015

Design revamp including new cover and logo. Adopts iThenticate plagiarism checking platform



2016

2016

Australian Family Physician (incorporating *Annals of General Practice*) celebrates Diamond Jubilee. Circulation 34,171

34,171



DIAMOND JUBILEE

