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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Nurses and midwives come under microscope in unique e-cohort study

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University of Queensland (UQ) researchers are undertaking the largest and only longitudinal study of nurses and midwives ever attempted in the world.

Associate Professor Cathy Turner, Coordinator of Research & Higher Degrees at UQ's [School of Nursing](#), is leading the [Nurses and Midwives e-cohort project](#), which will look into the work and health of those involved in these crucial health professions.

The study was launched by the Queensland Minister for Health, Stephen Robertson, today in Brisbane.

Despite being the largest single health professional group in Australia, Dr Turner said very little detailed research had been done on workforce trends over time within the nursing and midwifery professions and there are no previous longitudinal studies.

"There are about 270,000 nurses and midwives in Australia and yet we have little data about the factors affecting their work and health but have recently had to deal with severe workforce shortages," Dr Turner said.

"This study will provide important information to inform education and workforce policy for the nursing and midwifery professions and in addition, will have the capacity to examine a range of population health outcomes.

Dr Turner said the study also hoped to look at the issues associated with the short supply of nurses, not only in Australia but also in New Zealand where similar workforce problems existed.

"The median age is 42 and we already have a critical shortage of nurses at the moment and it is only going to get worse with our ageing nursing and midwifery workforce, retention problems and our ageing population."

Dr Turner said people studying undergraduate nursing programs would also be targeted in the study to try and quantify the attrition from those studying nursing at university and the retention of new graduates into the profession.

The Australian Research Council-funded study will invite all nurses and midwives in Australia and all nurses in New Zealand to take part during a 12-month recruitment process.

The Macquarie Bank Foundation is funding a post-doctoral research fellow to work on the study and Virgin Blue is sponsoring the study with the offer of free holiday flights to participants in the hope to entice a high recruitment rate.

Dr Turner said the project was also unique in that it would be one of the first to employ electronic research methods on such a large scale.

"Historically, studies of this nature are expensive as they are conducted in traditional paper-based mode and the studies are therefore confined to one country," Dr Turner said.

"Developing and employing e-research techniques will significantly reduce the costs and enable recruitment of multiple international cohorts."

Dr Turner has also received a 2006 Fulbright Senior Scholar award to enable her to spend several months with researchers who have been conducting the Harvard Nurses' Health Study, about to celebrate its 30th year, to learn about the challenges of longitudinal studies.

Nurses and midwives willing to take part in the research can visit the study website at [www.e-cohort.net](http://www.e-cohort.net) and register to be part of the study.

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