A steep learning curve in General Practice

Background;
Jan Allan, commenced working at Andrew Place 3½ years ago and was the first Practice Nurse employed by the practice. Prior to this Jan worked at Donvale Rehabilitation Hospital for 16½ years where her role was to coordinate the 80 bed hospital and run a 40 bed ward. In addition, she provided assessment to other metropolitan private and public hospitals to determine further private or public patient admissions.

The skills Jan learnt during this time were easily transferable to general practice, especially in the area of EPCs and Health Assessments as well as patient care coordination. Jan recalled; “The major obstacle at this time was the steep learning curve in learning the general practice language and ever present array of Item numbers”.

Benefits of General Practice
Jan felt the most significant benefit was that after 32 years she was no longer required to do shift work, especially weekends and Christmas, plus no more rosters!

Andrew Place
Jan commenced at Andrew Place under a trial agreement, one day a week. Both Jan and the doctors were unsure of the role and contributions towards collaborative patient care. Within a short period of time Jan’s hour increased to full time and the employment of a 2nd nurse. Jan was, by then, in a position to provide the training and orientation for that nurse.

Jan’s role has since expanded away from the ‘Clinic’ nurse role. With further education and courses she has obtained immunisation and Diabetes Educator credentials. This has provided her the opportunity for to contribute further to client care. She is trained in Diabetes Management as a Life Facilitator. Jan attends numerous conferences and most educational activities provided by the Division.

The role and scope of the nurses role within the practice has evolved quickly, from 1 day per week on a trial basis to where now, the practice now employs 4 nurses (2.1 FTE).

To coincide with the changes and growth seen in general practice, Jan’s role now includes systematic approached to EPC and Health Assessments - 80% of patients between 45 - 50 have received their item 717 Health Assessment). She utilises the PEN Clinical Audit Tool, prepares monthly reports for the Management / Clinical Meetings which captures nurse related item number utilisation and potential areas for growth. Procedures and protocols have been introduced and implemented to support recalls and reminder for all. The practice has a strong commitment in this area and 1 day a week is regarded as protected time to ensure Jan can complete her administrative duties.

The PEN Clinical Audit tool is accessible to all GPs and Nurses. This has allowed the practice to further commit to preventative care and targeted activities within the practice. In addition to monthly clinical meetings, the practice nurses meet bi-monthly, the GPs meet weekly and management meet monthly.

The joys of practice nursing are:
- working within a supportive team
- getting to know the patients, individually
• working with family and across generations.
• networking, as it is essential to not be isolated in the clinic.
• mentoring other practice nurses who are new to the role (co-ordinated through the Division)
• specialising and gaining extra credentials in specialist and areas, such as prevention and management, including asthma, spirometry, diabetes and as a Life facilitator

**Life outside the practice.**
Jan enjoys her time on the Sunshine Coast and recently Bali. She loves her family, friends and the Gym which complements her passion for the Life program and diabetes prevention. Jan’s wish list is to commence a ‘walking group’ for the patients attending Andrew Place Clinic, nurse led CDM clinics and to win the big one. Tattslotto!!