

## Pathology testing underpins modern healthcare

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) has welcomed the release of The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 'BEACH' report, the only data available in Australia on why doctors request pathology tests.

President of the RCPA, Dr Bev Rowbotham, says that the report highlights the important role that pathology testing plays in modern healthcare.

"Doctors are monitoring chronic disease more closely today than in the past, and using pathology testing to predict and prevent disease during preventative health check ups," says Dr Rowbotham.

"There is good evidence that we're seeing better testing in the management of national health priorities such as diabetes and heart disease, which should pay dividends in terms of savings to the overall healthcare budget as patient outcomes are improved and the total cost of chronic disease, including hospital admissions, is reduced.

"The RCPA believes that the development of guidelines on appropriate pathology requesting is needed as a priority.

"The College is already exploring the development of such guidelines, and is looking forward to working closely with the National Prescribing Service on these and other initiatives that will assist referring practitioners in determining when and what pathology tests are needed."

The RCPA is concerned about the implications of the increasing workload on the pathology workforce, which faces major shortages over the next ten years.

"Pathologists are as concerned as anyone that the testing undertaken is done so appropriately," says Dr Rowbotham.

"The last thing we want to be doing as pathologists is putting undue pressure on the workforce and medical system by carrying out tests that have been requested unnecessarily.

"But appropriate pathology testing will continue to increase in common diseases, such as obesity and cancer, and the manpower shortages amongst pathologists and scientists must be addressed urgently if we are to continue to deliver high quality testing with rapid turnaround that doctors rely on to manage their patients."

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The RCPA is the leading organisation representing pathologists in Australasia. Its mission is to train and support pathologists and to improve the use of pathology testing to achieve better healthcare.

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