

Q: What training is involved?

A: The prerequisite to becoming a clinical/medical microbiologist is a qualification as a medical practitioner. You will need to spend at least one year (preferably two) as a resident medical officer before taking up a post as a pathology registrar.

The minimum time for specialist training is five years, in a registrar position accredited by the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. This means that although you are undergoing further study, you are actually working and earning as a doctor at the same time. Once you have completed all the requirements and examinations and are accepted as a Fellow of the College you are entitled to use the letters FRCPA after your name.

Clinical or medical microbiology offers involvement in a spectrum of activities ranging across:

- basic laboratory science
- direct patient care
- public health
- infection control
- research and teaching
- business management

Medicine is Pathology

For more information
on becoming a Clinical Microbiologist
go to the College website at
www.rcpa.edu.au

This brochure is published by:

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A Career in Microbiology



Clinical Microbiology

Q: What is Microbiology?

A: Clinical microbiologists deal with diagnosing bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic infections. This helps prevent epidemics and has a considerable influence on the clinical management of patients.

Q: What does a Microbiologist do?

A: Clinical microbiologists work in diagnostic laboratories and pathology departments in large hospitals and private practice. The work focuses on disease diagnosis, treatment and surveillance. There is some opportunity to carry out research and development projects in the subspecialties of bacteriology, virology, mycology and parasitology.

Microbiologists may:

- analyse and/or perform tests on and with microorganisms
- write reports and papers, and present results
- identify microorganisms that cause disease
- develop microorganisms and the products of their growth for use in vaccines and medicines



Q: What personal characteristics does a Clinical Microbiologist need?

A: Varying combinations of the following traits:

- ability to make sound clinical judgements
- good computing skills and organisational ability
- ability to work as part of a team of medical, nursing and laboratory staff
- leadership skills
- need to be patient, inquiring, accurate, persistent, self motivated
- good report writing and observation skills

Q: What are the advantages of becoming a Microbiologist?

A: The last two decades have been ones of enormous change in clinical microbiology. “New” organisms have been discovered and characterised. “New” infectious diseases have been described and “old” infections have re-emerged as major threats, or have become increasingly resistant to previously effective antimicrobial agents. These challenges and advances are set to continue and will offer a constantly evolving, stimulating, and exciting career. Microbiologists are on the cutting edge of science.

Advances in technology and molecular medicine have greatly added to the microbiologist’s diagnostic resources and equipment. At the same time however, microbiology remains very much a “hands on” discipline, in many ways an art as much as a science, and one in which an individual pathologist’s experience, judgement and interpretive skills are pivotal.

