

## **NEW WORKFORCE STUDY PROJECTS A SEVERE SHORTAGE OF PATHOLOGISTS**

The most recent Pathology Workforce Study\*, conducted on behalf of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA), forecasts a severe labour shortage within the profession. The results of the study clearly indicate that the current and future demand for Australian Pathologists and Senior Scientists is higher than current supply levels and that significant gaps are developing in the workforce. This analysis mirrors the findings from earlier studies undertaken in both Australia and New Zealand and Internationally.

Speaking at this year's International Pathology Day event, Associate Professor Bruce Latham, President of the RCPA, said,

“Pathology is the backbone of healthcare; therefore, it is essential that the high standards of the profession are maintained by ensuring that trained doctors are in the required roles. Unfortunately, the results of the most recent workforce study have confirmed our concerns that pathology is facing a severe shortage. This projection highlights the need to increase the numbers of new Trainees and Fellows in order to address the balance of the Australian Pathologist workforce supply and demand by 2030. This also accounts for the ageing workforce; which has significant implications for the retirement of a large proportion of pathologists in the next ten years.”

The RCPA consistently monitors the pathology workforce by discipline, in terms of the distribution by State and Territory, and also the senior scientist workforce, both within Australia and in New Zealand. Vacancy levels and reasons for vacancies are analysed and we are committed to gaining a greater understanding of the current market status, and future supply and demand.

Not only is pathology integral to the diagnosis of every cancer, it is the foundation for the clinical practice of medicine, paving the way to the appropriate diagnosis, management and treatment of diseases. Pathologists are specialist medical practitioners who complete an advanced training program over 5 years in the disciplines of Anatomical Pathology, Chemical Pathology, Forensic Pathology, General Pathology, Genetic Pathology Haematology, Immunopathology and Microbiology. Training is also offered in these disciplines to senior scientists.

For the recent Pathology Workforce study, modelling was undertaken for each discipline of Pathology as well as Senior Scientists, for both Australia and New Zealand. Two growth drivers for the national Pathologist workforce were used and predicted a growth rate of between 3.4 and 3.8%.

The report has shown that there will likely be a continuing shortage of pathologists unless trainee numbers are increased. In Australia, to meet the projected service demand of the ageing population, and a growth rate of 3.8%, trainee commencements per annum needed to increase from 100 to 192 and new fellows to increase from 90 to 173 to balance supply and demand. In the base year of the workforce survey, there was a total 1924 Fellows and an additional 574 Trainees over the 5-6 years of training.

New Zealand has a lower level of supply of Pathologists at 61.4 per million population, compared to the national Australian supply of 78.4 per million population. This is lower than every State and Territory in Australia apart from the Northern Territory. The results of the projection modelling in New Zealand showed that there were an additional 14 -18 trainees needed for the total New Zealand Pathologist workforce.

“The RCPA is committed to the training and professional development of pathologists throughout Australasia. It is imperative that we increase the numbers of trainees and new fellows on an ongoing basis to meet increasing demand. We need to establish where additional trainees are most urgently needed, and whether the findings are consistent with local knowledge and labour market performance. The Commonwealth and State governments will be important stakeholders in the level of funding available for additional positions,” said A/Prof Latham.

For more information on the RCPA, visit [www.rcpa.edu.au](http://www.rcpa.edu.au) or see our updates on [Facebook](#) or Twitter - [@PathologyRCPA](#) #RCPA #pathology #MedicinesPathology.

\*The Report was produced by KBC Australia using workforce modelling tools from the Department of Health which are used by the Commonwealth Government for Workforce Planning.

## **ENDS**

### **About the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia:**

The RCPA is the leading professional organisation representing pathologists, medical specialists and scientists who provide pathology testing 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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