

5 Medical workforce in hospitals

Hospitals employed 230,847 people in 1996 – 43.0% of the total health industry workforce. In 1995–96, total government and non-government expenditure on public acute care hospitals and private hospitals was \$11.3 billion and \$3.2 billion respectively – 37.1% of recurrent health expenditure in Australia (AIHW 1998, pp. 167, 182). Hospitals provided treatment to 5.2 million admitted patients, who spent 23.3 million patient days in hospital (AIHW 1997). Furthermore, according to the 1995 National Health Survey, 497,000 people made a visit to a casualty, emergency or outpatients department in the two weeks before interview (ABS 1997).

Thus hospitals, and their medical workforce, make a considerable contribution to the provision of health services in Australia. This chapter contains data on the characteristics of the medical workforces employed in public and private hospitals in 1996, showing considerable differences among metropolitan, regional and small rural hospitals, and between public and private hospitals. It is of particular note that almost two-thirds of medical practitioners in private hospitals were specialists, and a further 20.1% were general practitioners. In contrast, specialists represented 46.3%, and general practitioners 10.7%, of doctors employed in public hospitals, whereas specialists-in-training and hospital non-specialists have a much larger workforce contribution. Much higher proportions of general practitioners were employed in both public and private hospitals in small rural areas, than in hospitals in metropolitan areas.

5.1 Public hospitals

The data in this section are on medical practitioners who indicated that their main, second or third job was in a public hospital in 1996. The features of public hospital medical practitioners included the following:

- 19,948 medical practitioners worked in public hospitals – 41.8% of all practising medical practitioners.
- 88.9% of all specialists-in-training worked in a public hospital, as did 83.2% of hospital non-specialists, 58.7% of specialists, 10.4% of primary care practitioners and 32.5% of non-clinicians.
- 5,252 of these practitioners were female – 26.3% of the public hospital medical workforce. This proportion was similar across most States and Territories but much lower in Tasmania (17.8%).
- The distribution of public hospital medical practitioners across the occupation of their main job differed by sex. Among males, 53.0% worked as specialists in their main job; 18.2% as specialists-in-training; 14.9% as hospital non-specialists; 10.6% as primary care practitioners; and the remaining 3.3% as non-clinicians, mainly as administrators (1.2%). The largest occupation group for females was hospital non-specialists (31.7%), followed by specialists (27.7%), specialists-in-training (24.4%), primary care practitioners (10.9%), and the remaining 5.3% as non-clinicians, mainly as administrators (1.6%) and researchers (1.0%).
- 85.1% of public hospital medical practitioners who worked as a clinician in their main hospital job were employed in metropolitan centres, along with 13.8% in rural areas and 1.1% in remote areas. By comparison, the distribution of the overall population was 71.1% living in metropolitan centres, 25.9% in rural areas and 3.0% in remote areas.

- Specialists represented 46.3% of medical practitioners working in public hospitals, but the medical occupation distribution varied by region. In capital city and other metropolitan centres, specialists comprised around 45% and hospital non-specialists and specialists-in-training comprised around 20% each of the public hospital workforce. In large rural centres, specialists made up 51.5%, and hospital non-specialists 23.3%, of the public hospital workforce with around 10% from each of the other clinical occupations. In small rural centres, primary care practitioners represented only 37.0% of the public hospital workforce, and in remote areas, primary care practitioners (41.5%) and hospital non-specialists (34.1%) were predominant.
- 83.2% of medical practitioners working in a public hospital had obtained their initial qualification in Australia, and the remainder had qualified in the United Kingdom or Ireland (6.3%), Asian countries (4.4%), New Zealand (3.0%), and other countries (3.2%).
- 1.8% of public hospital medical practitioners enumerated in the AIHW labour force survey were not Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia. Of these, 31.0% had obtained their initial qualification in Australia and 30.1% had qualified in the United Kingdom or Ireland. However many of the temporary resident overseas-trained doctors employed in hospitals in 1996 would not have been enumerated in the survey because their registration was for a fixed term of less than a year, so they did not receive a registration renewal notice and survey form.

The AIHW also collects data on salaried medical officers in its national public hospital data collection. These are published in the *Australian Hospital Statistics* series of publications.

These data are for full-time equivalent (FTE) salaried medical officers and, in addition to hospital non-specialists, include specialists-in-training and salaried specialists such as medical administrators and emergency medicine, geriatric medicine, rehabilitation medicine and occupational medicine specialists employed in public hospitals.

From 1985–86 to 1995–96, FTE salaried medical officers increased by 40.8% in public and repatriation hospitals (excluding psychiatric hospitals) – rising from 9,300 to 13,095. Over the same period, patient separations increased by 47.1% from 2.5 million to 3.6 million and patient days declined from 16.9 million to 15.6 million, reflecting a 37.1% reduction in the average stay from 6.9 days to 4.3 days.

Table 21: All medical practitioners working in public hospitals: occupation of main job and region, Australia, 1996

Occupation of main job	Capital city	Other metro. centre	Large rural centre	Small rural centre	Other rural area	Remote	Total
<i>Clinician</i>	14,824	1,509	1,297	610	732	214	19,186
Primary care	901	175	155	237	576	91	2,134
Hospital non-specialist	2,923	378	316	87	71	75	3,850
Specialist	7,484	667	699	273	80	40	9,243
Specialist-in-training	3,515	289	127	13	5	9	3,958
<i>Non-clinician</i>	614	45	59	30	9	5	761
Administrator	200	17	26	16	3	5	266
Teacher/educator	39	3	0	2	0	0	44
Researcher	91	2	0	2	0	0	94
Public health physician	110	11	12	2	2	0	135
Occupational health physician	33	3	2	0	0	0	38
Other	142	9	19	9	5	0	185
Total	15,438	1,554	1,356	640	741	219	19,948
	(per cent)						
<i>Clinician</i>	96.0	97.1	95.7	95.3	98.7	97.9	96.2
Primary care	5.8	11.2	11.4	37.0	77.7	41.5	10.7
Hospital non-specialist	18.9	24.3	23.3	13.7	9.5	34.1	19.3
Specialist	48.5	42.9	51.5	42.6	10.8	18.1	46.3
Specialist-in-training	22.8	18.6	9.4	2.0	0.6	4.2	19.8
<i>Non-clinician</i>	4.0	2.9	4.3	4.7	1.3	2.1	3.8
Administrator	1.3	1.1	1.9	2.4	0.4	2.1	1.3
Teacher/educator	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2
Researcher	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5
Public health physician	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.7
Occupational health physician	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Other	0.9	0.6	1.4	1.5	0.6	0.0	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

5.2 Private hospitals

The data in this section are on medical practitioners who indicated their main, second or third job was in a private hospital in 1996. The features of private hospital medical practitioners included the following:

- 4,904 medical practitioners worked in private hospitals, comprising 10.3% of all employed medical practitioners.
- 879 (17.9%) were female.
- 19.5% of all specialists worked in a private hospital, as did 4.8% of primary care practitioners, 8.2% of specialists-in-training, 7.4% of hospital non-specialists, 4.8% of primary care practitioners and 5.6% of non-clinicians.
- Similar to the public hospital workforce, the distribution of employment in private hospitals across main occupation differed by sex. Among males, 67.1% worked as specialists in their main job; 17.5% as primary care practitioners; 6.9% as specialists-in-training; 5.9% as hospital non-specialists; and the remaining 2.5% as non-clinicians. Specialists were the largest occupation group (42.4%) for females, followed by primary care practitioners (32.1%), hospital non-specialists (11.8%), specialists-in-training (10.1%), and non-clinicians (3.4%).
- 84.3% of private hospital medical practitioners working as clinicians in their main hospital job were employed in capital cities and other metropolitan centres; 13.4% were employed in large and small rural centres; and 2.3% were employed in other rural and remote areas. By comparison, the distribution of the overall population was 71.1% living in capital cities and other metropolitan centres, 12.5% in large and small rural areas and 16.3% in other rural and remote areas.
- Specialists represented 62.7% of medical practitioners working in private hospitals, but the medical occupation distribution varied by region. In capital cities, other metropolitan centres, large rural centres and small rural centres, specialists comprised 57.5% to 74.6% of the private hospital workforce. In other rural and remote areas, primary care practitioners were predominant in the private hospital medical workforce (65.4%).
- 82.6% of medical practitioners working in a private hospital had obtained their initial qualification in Australia, while the remainder had qualified in New Zealand (2.8%), the United Kingdom or Ireland (6.6%), Asian countries (4.2%), and other countries (3.8%).

Table 22: All medical practitioners working in private hospitals: occupation of main job and region, Australia, 1996

Occupation of main job	Capital city	Other metro centre	Large rural centre	Small rural centre	Other rural and remote areas	Total
<i>Clinician</i>	3,597	425	443	198	108	4,771
Primary care	650	110	84	71	72	987
Hospital non-specialist	275	37	17	5	9	343
Specialist	2,345	250	334	121	24	3,075
Specialist-in-training	327	27	8	2	3	367
<i>Non-clinician</i>	107	10	5	9	2	133
Administrator	26	3	3	0	0	33
Teacher/educator	2	2	0	1	0	5
Researcher	11	0	0	0	0	11
Public health physician	5	2	0	0	0	11
Occupational health physician	5	0	2	0	0	10
Other	51	4	0	7	2	64
Total	3,704	435	448	207	110	4,904
	(per cent)					
<i>Clinician</i>	97.1	97.7	98.8	95.9	98.3	97.3
Primary care	17.5	25.3	18.8	34.2	65.2	20.1
Hospital non-specialist	7.4	8.6	3.8	2.2	8.3	7.0
Specialist	63.3	57.5	74.5	58.7	21.9	62.7
Specialist-in-training	8.8	6.2	1.8	0.8	2.9	7.5
<i>Non-clinician</i>	2.9	2.3	1.2	4.1	1.7	2.7
Administrator	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.7
Teacher/educator	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.1
Researcher	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Public health physician	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Occupational health physician	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.2
Other	1.4	0.8	0.0	3.4	1.7	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0