

4 Hospital non-specialists

The hospital non-specialist workforce makes a major contribution to the provision of medical services in hospitals. This workforce includes doctors in training as interns and resident medical officers (RMOs), and career medical officers (CMOs), hospital medical officers (HMOs) and other salaried hospital doctors who are not specialists or in recognised training programs to become specialists.

Data monitoring is particularly important for three current workforce issues concerning hospital non-specialists:

- shortages of hospital non-specialists;
- the management of workforce change away from a culture of excessive working hours;
- the change in workforce numbers arising from restrictions introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 1996 to access to rendering of Medicare services for both new hospital non-specialists and overseas medical graduates entering Australia for temporary or permanent employment. Under these restrictions, only Australian doctors accepted into a recognised general practice or specialist training program, and overseas graduates with a recognised postgraduate medical qualification, are eligible to apply to the Health Insurance Commission for recognition to bill for Medicare services. The effect of these restrictions was expected to make continued hospital employment more attractive as a career path for some Australian graduates, and the principal avenue of employment for most temporary resident overseas graduates.

The Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council has acknowledged the need for a detailed workforce planning analysis of the hospital non-specialist workforce, and the AIHW will be assisting the Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee to conduct this analysis in 1998-99.

In this report, the 1996 data highlight characteristics of the hospital non-specialist workforce immediately before the changes in Medicare provider access and the safe working hours campaign for junior hospital doctors which was initiated by the Australian Medical Association. Given a significantly lower response to the AIHW labour force survey by doctors younger than 35 years, the workforce estimates for hospital non-specialists and specialists-in-training are subject to significantly greater estimation error than for other sectors of the medical workforce and should be interpreted with care.

Composition of the hospital non-specialist workforce

- There were 4,630 hospital non-specialists in 1996 – 10.2% of the total clinician workforce.
- 2,008 (43.4%) were females.
- 3,537 (76.4%) were interns or RMOs, and the remaining 1,093 (23.6%) were CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists.
- 94.8% of interns and RMOs and 85.2% of other hospital non-specialists were employed in the public sector.

Geographic distribution

- The numbers of hospital non-specialists per 100,000 population varied among the States and Territories, from 31.9 per 100,000 population in the Northern Territory to 18.1 in Western Australia.

- The number of interns and RMOs varied from a high of 24.2 per 100,000 population in New South Wales to a low of 12.6 in Western Australia. The other States and Territories all had 16–20 per 100,000 population.
- CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists ranged from 14.6 per 100,000 population in the Australian Capital Territory and 13.2 in the Northern Territory to 2.4 in Victoria.
- The numbers of hospital non-specialists per 100,000 population varied among regions from 34.4 per 100,000 population in other metropolitan centres and 33.3 in large rural centres down to 3.2 in other rural areas and 12.2 in remote areas. This regional variation mainly arises from the location of medical training hospitals with large numbers of interns and RMOs in the large centres.

Age distribution

- 15.2% of male and 20.0% of female interns and RMOs were younger than 25 years.
- Only 7.4% of male and 9.4% of female interns and RMOs were aged 35 years or more.
- 41.8% of CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists were younger than 35 years, 29.5% were 35–44 years, 15.6% were 45–54 years, and 13.1% were older than 55 years.

Hours worked

- Only 3.3% of male and 5.5% of female interns and RMOs worked fewer than 35 hours per week.
- 15.8% of male and 14.8% of female interns and RMOs worked 65 hours or more per week.
- 5.3% of male and 4.9% of female interns and RMOs worked 80 hours or more per week.
- 11.4% of male and 37.3% of female CMOs and HMOs worked less than 35 hours per week.
- 12.1% of male and 9.6% of female CMOs and HMOs worked 65 hours or more per week.
- 4.0% of male and 4.4% of female CMOs and HMOs worked 80 hours or more per week.

Table 17: Hospital non-specialists: classification, age and sex, States and Territories, 1996

Classification/age	NSW	Vic	Qlc	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Males									
Intern/RMO									
<25	119	43	71	11	24	20	0	0	288
25-34	611	348	264	80	103	23	24	12	1,466
35-44	51	19	27	4	8	1	3	3	117
45+	10	5	7	2	0	0	0	0	24
Total	792	416	370	97	135	44	27	15	1,896
Other ^(a)									
<35	126	19	86	28	36	7	13	6	320
35-44	83	32	45	11	23	4	8	7	214
45-54	31	11	32	13	9	0	3	4	103
55+	27	5	26	16	7	3	4	1	89
Total	267	68	189	67	75	14	28	19	726
Total									
<25	123	43	71	11	24	20	0	0	292
25-34	734	368	350	108	138	30	38	18	1,783
35-44	134	51	72	15	31	6	11	10	331
45-54	41	16	38	15	9	0	3	4	127
55+	27	5	26	16	7	3	4	1	89
Total	1,059	484	557	164	210	58	56	34	2,622
Females									
Intern/RMO									
<25	136	52	55	24	32	29	0	0	328
25-34	505	247	201	88	64	18	19	17	1,158
35-54	58	10	24	10	15	1	7	3	129
45+	12	5	7	2	0	0	0	0	26
Total	710	314	287	124	111	48	26	20	1,642
Other ^(a)									
<35	52	7	35	15	15	8	3	0	137
35-44	32	15	30	13	11	0	5	2	108
45-54	17	14	13	2	15	0	5	2	68
55+	14	7	14	4	9	0	3	2	54
Total	115	43	92	34	49	8	16	5	367
Total									
<25	136	52	55	24	32	29	0	0	328
25-34	556	254	240	103	78	25	22	17	1,295
35-44	90	25	55	23	27	1	12	5	237
45-54	29	19	20	4	15	0	5	2	94
55+	14	7	14	4	9	0	3	2	54
Total	825	357	382	159	161	56	42	26	2,008
Persons									
Intern/RMO									
<25	254	95	126	35	57	49	0	0	616
25-34	1,116	595	466	168	166	41	43	29	2,624
35-44	109	29	52	14	24	3	10	6	246
45+	22	10	14	4	0	0	0	0	51
Total	1,502	730	658	222	246	92	53	35	3,537
Other ^(a)									
<35	178	26	124	43	50	15	16	6	457
35-44	115	47	75	24	34	4	14	9	322
45-54	47	26	44	15	24	0	8	6	170
55+	41	12	40	20	16	3	7	3	143
Total	382	111	283	101	125	21	45	24	1,093
Total									
<25	258	95	126	35	57	49	0	0	620
25-34	1,290	621	590	210	216	55	59	35	3,078
35-44	225	76	127	38	58	7	23	15	568
45-54	70	36	58	19	24	0	8	6	221
55+	41	12	40	20	16	3	7	3	143
Total	1,884	841	941	323	371	114	98	59	4,630

(a) Mainly CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists.

Table 18: Hospital non-specialists: classification and sector of employment, States and Territories, 1996

Classification/ sector	NSW	Vic	Qlc	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Intern/RMO									
Private sector	62	24	38	11	6	38	1	2	183
Public sector	1,441	705	615	211	240	54	51	33	3,354
<i>All sectors</i>	<i>1,502</i>	<i>730</i>	<i>657</i>	<i>222</i>	<i>246</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>3,537</i>
Other^(a)									
Private sector	57	19	48	12	10	13	3	0	162
Public sector	324	92	235	89	115	9	42	24	931
<i>All sectors</i>	<i>382</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>283</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>1,093</i>
Total									
Private sector	119	43	87	22	16	51	4	2	345
Public sector	1,765	798	854	300	355	63	94	57	4,286
All sectors	1,884	841	941	323	371	114	98	59	4,630

(a) Mainly CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists.

Table 19: Interns and RMOs: total hours worked per week and sex, States and Territories, 1996

Total hours worked per week	NSW	Vic	Qlc	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Males									
0-19	14	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	16
20-34	24	17	1	0	4	0	0	0	47
35-49	168	93	75	36	21	15	0	9	421
50-64	446	232	255	45	90	23	15	3	1,112
65-79	95	55	22	14	4	3	4	1	199
80+	46	19	6	2	15	3	5	1	101
<i>Total</i>	<i>792</i>	<i>416</i>	<i>370</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1,896</i>
Females									
0-19	24	5	2	2	2	0	0	0	35
20-34	26	14	4	2	9	0	0	0	55
35-49	183	96	83	41	18	13	0	0	434
50-64	359	143	186	60	67	26	15	18	874
65-79	68	47	5	17	7	9	4	2	162
80+	50	10	3	2	9	0	6	0	81
<i>Total</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>1,642</i>
Persons									
0-19	38	5	5	2	2	0	0	0	52
20-34	50	31	6	2	13	0	0	0	102
35-49	351	189	161	77	39	28	0	9	854
50-64	804	374	445	105	157	49	30	21	1,986
65-79	163	102	31	31	11	12	5	3	361
80+	96	29	5	4	24	3	15	1	182
Total	1,502	730	657	222	246	92	53	35	3,537

Table 20: Other hospital medical practitioners:^(a) total hours worked per week and sex, States and Territories, 1996

Total hours worked per week	NSW	Vic	Qlc	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Males									
0-19	12	3	6	0	2	0	2	0	25
20-34	24	7	9	6	7	2	2	2	58
35-49	76	25	64	37	37	6	12	5	261
50-64	111	29	93	17	20	3	14	8	295
65-79	30	3	12	6	3	0	0	5	59
80+	15	1	4	0	6	3	0	0	29
Total	267	68	187	67	75	14	29	19	726
Females									
0-19	20	6	18	5	8	2	1	0	61
20-34	26	13	15	2	8	4	5	2	76
35-49	37	13	27	21	27	0	8	4	136
50-64	18	5	24	7	2	2	1	0	59
65-79	6	3	7	0	3	0	0	0	19
80+	7	3	4	0	2	0	0	0	16
Total	115	43	97	34	49	8	16	5	367
Persons									
0-19	33	9	25	5	10	2	3	0	86
20-34	50	20	24	9	15	5	7	3	134
35-49	112	38	91	57	64	6	20	8	397
50-64	129	34	117	24	22	5	15	8	354
65-79	36	5	18	6	7	0	0	5	77
80+	22	4	8	0	7	3	0	0	45
Total	382	111	284	101	125	21	45	24	1,093

(a) Mainly CMOs, HMOs and other salaried non-specialists.