

# Working as a dermatologist

## New Zealand dermatologists talk about the reality of working within this field

### **Why did you choose dermatology and what do you like most?**

One dermatologist said that his interest in dermatology lies in the intrinsic lesions of skin disease and in the correlation with internal medical disorders. Dermatology combines medical and surgical components, uses elements of many disciplines within medicine, and enables collaboration with other specialties. Sessional work hours and no on-call were also factors in specialising in dermatology.

### **What strengths and abilities make a good dermatologist?**

You need to possess a strong visual and associative memory, a sound background in general medicine, and some degree of surgical skill. You must also be able to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues.

### **As a specialist, can you describe a typical day?**

Work involves outpatient consultations, with morning and afternoon clinics of up to 14 or 15 patients. On some days, you can spend a morning or afternoon in surgery treating four or five cases. Dermatology involves supervising registrars in clinical and surgical components of the specialty.

### **What do you think are the future challenges of dermatology?**

Understanding the pathology and aetiology of many conditions and new topical therapies for inflammatory skin disorders and NMSC are increasing. The interface between cosmetic dermatology and medical dermatology continues to present ongoing challenges.

### **What advice would you give someone thinking about a career in dermatology?**

Dermatology is a dynamic, rapidly changing specialty. Insights from molecular biology and immunology are likely to prove crucial in the future.

### **What are future opportunities in dermatology?**

Well-trained specialists are welcomed throughout New Zealand.

### **What is the work/life balance like?**

Overseas training is a requirement for dermatology. One dermatologist said that it is always difficult to pursue a career while you have young children, but it has been manageable.

Dermatology involves mainly office hours, although the on-call work can be slightly disruptive for family life.

**What are the disadvantages of dermatology?**

There are limited numbers of positions with adequate funding overseas (including Australia) and New Zealand qualifications are not recognised in Australia. Opportunities for research in New Zealand are limited and no academic positions are currently available

**Any comments on the current training?**

The training programme in New Zealand is highly regarded but there are few registrar posts and trainees are required to spend time in more than one location. It can be difficult to secure and obtain funding for overseas positions. Post-FRACP training can be undertaken in clinical dermatology, subspecialty training or research related to dermatology.