

# Working as an emergency medicine specialist

## New Zealand emergency medicine specialists talk about the reality of working within this field

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

It is varied and wide ranging - the clinical work provides you with opportunities to assess the full spectrum of medical conditions. Emergency medicine can be extremely rewarding since you are able to make a significant difference to the well-being of your patients. It also offers plenty of scope to move into areas such as teaching, research or administration. There is plenty of action and excitement, with a wide variety of people and problems.

### **What strengths and abilities make a good emergency medicine specialist?**

You must be able to make swift decisions and stay calm in stressful situations. You need to have strong leadership skills and be able to work well in a team situation. It is important to be decisive in situations when you don't always have all the information at your fingertips. You need good problem solving and diagnostic skills, common sense, flexibility, diplomacy and the ability to think laterally. You also need to be able to deal with uncertainty since you cannot always make an exact diagnosis.

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

One doctor who qualified a year ago is currently rostered for 50 hours each week. Of this time, two and a half days are taken up with clinical shifts and one day is allocated for other activities such as office administration. In addition one night on-call is scheduled each week and one weekend in four is worked.

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

It is likely that an increasing number of dual fellowships will become available (with paediatrics, for example) which may alter job structures emergency medicine. A greater breadth and depth of research is needed overall, and rural emergency medicine is a particular area that requires further development.

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

Talk to registrars and specialists working in the specialty and it is a good idea to do a three-month house officer rotation in emergency medicine.

### **What are future opportunities in emergency medicine?**

There are many jobs available in New Zealand although you need to be prepared to take a job outside Auckland. All recent trainees have found positions upon completion of training.

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

It is easy to obtain part time work during training or after becoming a consultant because the job is shift-based.

One specialist said that family life is 'manageable' when you work in emergency medicine.

**What are the disadvantages of emergency medicine?**

The specialty does not offer the continuity of care that is possible in some other disciplines so you are unlikely to oversee a patients' treatment through to the end. The biggest problem associated with working in emergency medicine is burn-out due to stress and the demands of the job.