

MJA *Careers*

THE MEDICAL JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIA

Managing chaos: a career in medical administration

C1

DO you like the sound of a medical career away from a waiting room full of patients, with regular office hours and no on-call duties? Then don't go into medical administration. "It's a 24-hour a day job", exclaims Dr Karen Owen, Chief Executive of the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA). "But it's engaging, challenging and there's plenty of variety", she adds.

The term "medical administration" is a broad one. Doctors in the medical administration specialty can be engaged in a wide variety of roles, not just in hospitals, but in a range of organisations, such as education, pharmaceutical or technology companies; or government departments such as health, defence, immigration and corrections where they run health services and advise on health policy and strategy.

But the "top rung" in this speciality is a position as Executive Medical Director or Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in a large, metropolitan teaching hospital, health service or private hospital.

The job is about as diverse as can be found in medicine. As well as managing the day-to-day business of health

services for communities, medical administrators oversee multimillion-dollar budgets, manage clinical workforces, oversee clinical support services, and manage capital investments such as buildings and biomedical technologies. They must regularly liaise with multiple stakeholders including hospital boards, health departments and ministers.

A major part of their role is in dealing with medicolegal and performance issues relating to clinical services and medical staff.

Dr Michael Walsh, RACMA Board member and Fellow, says these can be among the most difficult tasks as they involve dealing with medical colleagues, as in the case of a surgeon who has been behaving in an unprofessional manner in the operating theatre.

So good communication and collaboration skills are essential to the role, and not just with medical colleagues but with nursing staff, the hospital CEO, the finance manager, and others in the health care team. Maturity, flexibility, and good problem-solving and people skills are essential to the role, he says.

Most senior medical administrators are medically trained and have management training. Directors of medical services

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On Call 
LOCUMS

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in metropolitan hospitals are usually doctors, although they don't always have management qualifications.

Dr Walsh says a clinical background adds credibility to the person and the role and makes consultation with the medical workforce smoother. Issues relating to medical procedures and treatments are easier to address because they're familiar to someone with medical training. Medical administrators are often former specialist doctors seeking a new challenge.

Formal medical specialty training isn't always a prerequisite for a career in the field. Some people get there after gaining experiences in various management roles such as head of department. Others get there after gaining postgraduate qualifications in health management or public health.

But the most respected qualifications are those in medical administration offered through the RACMA, the College recognised by the Australian Medical Council to offer specialist fellowship in medical administration.

Entrants into the RACMA's fellowship training must have an MB BS degree (or equivalent) and a minimum of 3 years of medical practice experience. They must also complete a master's degree (which may be in public health or health services management or, increasingly, an MBA) during training.

Fellowship training consists of 3 years full-time training, culminating in an oral examination. Advanced candidates with 5 or more years of experience in medical management and another fellowship may do it in less, under the College's Accelerated Pathway to Fellowship program.

Those who don't wish to do the full fellowship training may become an Associate Fellow, after successfully completing a 9-month part-time course of workshops and tutorials.

Employment prospects generally are excellent. There is a widespread shortage of medical administrators, with demand particularly high in rural hospitals, says Dr Owen.

Many doctors who do the College's training programs are already employed as medical managers and are undertaking the training to acquire the formal qualification. If not, they usually have a substantive job by the time they finish training.

There is also plenty of demand for locum medical

administrators, which may suit medical administrators who are semi-retired, says Dr Owen.

And demand for medical administrators is likely to remain high as funded training places are limited.

Public sector salary is in line with experienced hospital salaried staff specialists. Remuneration packages, including super, professional development allowances and (in some states)

on-call allowances, are usually in excess of \$300,000 per annum, but may be up to half a million dollars a year in more difficult-to-fill posts in some jurisdictions. In the private sector, contracts are negotiable. But the workload can be heavy, and the hours are well in excess of 40 hours a week, says Dr Owen. It's a stressful

job requiring a full-time commitment, she adds. Usually, you have to give up your clinical practice.

Hospital directors of medical services are constantly on call, Dr Walsh says, because many of the emergencies that require their intervention take place after hours — such as an emergency operating theatre or ambulance bypass crises.

So why do it, if it takes up so much of your life? It's challenging, interesting and there's plenty of variety, says Dr Walsh. "You're exposed to a wide range of clinical and management situations, even more so than in clinical practice."

Just don't expect to put your feet up.

For more information on the RACMA
<http://www.racma.edu.au/>

"You're exposed to a wide range of clinical and management situations, even more so than in clinical practice"



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GP LOCUM

NW QLD GP (ref: 22571)
Feb ongoing
\$1500 per day
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HAEMATOLOGIST

South East QLD (Ref: 22661)
Jan - Mar
\$2000 per day
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MEDICAL RMO

NT (JS151110-2)
ASAP - 24 Jan 2011
\$100 - \$110 per hour
Call **Carole 02 8353 9017**

GEN MED PHYSICIAN

NSW (ref: 22025)
14 January to 11 April
\$2000 p/day + travel/accom.
Call **Claudine 02 8353 9020**

O&G CONSULTANT

WA (Ref: 23497)
Feb 4th for 8 wks - part time
\$2200 per day worked
Call **Amber 02 8353 9011**

PSYCH - GENERAL ADULT

North West TAS (Ref: 18987)
4th Jan - 15th Feb
\$2000 per day + On-call rates
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PSYCH REGISTRAR

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ORTHO REGISTRAR

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Central Tablelands NSW	From	10/03/2011	To	15/03/2011	\$2,000	p/d

GENERAL MEDICINE VMO

South Eastern QLD	From	17/01/2011	To	21/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Northern NSW	From	4/02/2011	To	11/02/2011	\$2,000	p/d
South Eastern NSW	From	14/01/2011	To	23/01/2011	\$2,500	p/d
Northern NSW	From	28/01/2011	To	2/02/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Country NSW	From	ASAP	To	31/01/2011	NEG	p/d

GENERAL SURGERY VMO

Rural NSW	From	17/01/2011	To	30/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Country VIC	From	7/01/2011	To	10/01/2011	\$1,800	p/d
Country QLD	From	ASAP	To	10/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d

PSYCHIATRY VMO

Coastal QLD	From	ASAP	To	10/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Far North QLD	From	ASAP	To	Permanent	Billings	p/d

PAEDIATRIC VMO

North East NSW	From	3/01/2011	To	10/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
South Eastern QLD	From	17/01/2011	To	21/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Central Coast QLD	From	ASAP	To	Ongoing	\$1,983	p/d
South Eastern NSW	From	3/01/2011	To	17/01/2011	\$2,500	p/d
Mid North Coast NSW	From	14/01/2011	To	20/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d

FACEM

South East VIC	From	January	To	Ongoing	\$2,000	p/d
ACT	From		To	Ongoing	\$2,600	p/d
Central Coast NSW	From		To	Ongoing	\$247	p/d

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON VMO

North West NSW	From	January	To	Ongoing	NEG	p/d
Northern NSW	From	21/01/2011	To	24/01/2011	\$2,000	p/d
Mid North Coast NSW	From	Various	To	Ongoing	\$2,200	p/d

GP

Coastal QLD	From	Full/Part Time			\$130	p/h
North Western NSW	From	Ongoing	To	1 week/month	Neg	p/d
North QLD	From	Various	To	Ongoing	% of Billings	
Western Sydney NSW	From	Permanent - Skin Cancer C			Neg	

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The Person

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For full job description and selection criteria see the CASA website www.casa.gov.au

There are mandatory qualifications outlined in the position description on our website including either current registration or the ability to gain in a timely manner, full registration as a Medical Practitioner by The Medical Board of Australia or eligibility for such full registration. Other desirable characteristics would include:

- A background in aviation medicine regulatory standards and policies
- Experience in leading or managing small teams or in working effectively in a small team environment.

Dr Pooshan Navathe

Principal Medical Officer

Pooshan.Navathe@casa.gov.au

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A most competitive remuneration package is offered. Interested applicants should contact Mr John Cross on: 0417 332 598 for a confidential discussion.

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Formal applications, including the contact details of two referees, should be forwarded to Mark Page, Chief Executive Officer, Cairns Private Hospital, PO Box 919, CAIRNS QLD 4870. Email to clarkek@ramsayhealth.com.au or fax: 07 4052 5163

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