



MEDIA RELEASE

Ophthalmology training sets high standards



13 December 2006

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) has endorsed the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists' training program for specialist ophthalmologists after a comprehensive review that benchmarked the College's training program against national standards.

The AMC found the College's training program was sound, relevant and designed to deliver competent, fully trained ophthalmologists, capable of independent clinical practice.

The report by the AMC accreditation team commends the College's demonstrated commitment to very high quality education and training, the College's explicit standards for ophthalmic practice and clinical performance, and the way in which the College reviews and improves the training program.

The report also praises the support provided to consultant ophthalmologists who supervise trainees and commends the College for introducing meaningful workplace assessments of trainees' surgical skills and other competencies.

To be granted College Fellowship, which leads to independent practice as an ophthalmologist, medical practitioners must successfully complete the College's training program. The five-year program is completed while trainees work in College-accredited hospital posts and includes structured education programs and development of surgical skills. On-the-job training is supported by a curriculum that specifies the standard of basic science knowledge and the clinical standards - skills, knowledge and behaviour - required for safe practice as an ophthalmologist.

The assessment by the AMC expert team included visits to hospitals in Australia and New Zealand where training occurs; a review of College documents and interviews with College representatives; surveys of doctors completing ophthalmology training and their

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supervisors; and interviews and submissions from external stakeholders such as health departments, professional bodies in the medical profession and the university medical schools. The team's detailed report (available on the AMC website at www.amc.org.au) makes a range of recommendations to improve the already high quality training and assessment. It also recommends collaboration between the College and the health departments to address some more intractable issues, such as the barriers to generalist ophthalmology training, and limits to teaching and supervision imposed by the high workload and the limited available resources. The report also encourages the College to explore opportunities for training in rural locations and the private sector.

The President of the College, Dr Andrew Stewart, welcomed the AMC's decision.

"The College was particularly impressed with the professional approach adopted by the AMC and its accreditation team," said Dr Stewart

"The community can be assured that its interests are well served by AMC accreditation of medical specialist training," he said.

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