

## **Guide for Applicants to the New Zealand Training Program**

### **Introduction**

Applicants are directed to the current edition of the Vocational Training Program Handbook for a general guide to the functions of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO), the application process, and pre-requisites.

### **New Zealand**

The start date is typically the second Monday of December. Vocational Training Posts are provided for the full four years of training. In their 5<sup>th</sup> year most trainees get experience overseas, however, there are several posts suitable for 5<sup>th</sup> years in Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington.

The New Zealand program has developed over recent years to:

1. provide exposure to all areas of ophthalmology to be a comprehensive ophthalmologist
2. support trainees in their preparation for exams
3. broaden their experience to different styles of Ophthalmic practice in the NZ health system

Trainees should expect to be rotated through two of the main centres of Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin for 12-24 months each, and one or two provincial centres (e.g. six months each). Provincial centres include Rotorua, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Nelson and Hawkes Bay.

### **Selection Process**

Curricula vitae and referee reports are assessed and candidates selected for interview. Both the CV grading and interview are based around a weighted interpretation of the 7CanMed criteria as outlined in the VTP handbook.

### **Advice to prospective applicants**

The selection panel is dedicated to find the most suitable doctors for training who will eventually contribute to the New Zealand Ophthalmic community. There is no expectation that applicants complete higher degrees prior to applying.

The selection panel is made up of Ophthalmologists from all the employing District Health Boards (DHB) that have training posts. In New Zealand the DHBs receive funding for training doctors via Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) has recently discontinued funding for trainee registrars who are not New Zealand citizens or Permanent Residents. Therefore, DHBs have an incentive to consider New Zealanders before other nationals. Exceptions are possible; the DHB must apply for this. For example, a doctor who has nearly completed the requisite two years of residence in New Zealand towards becoming a permanent resident and made commitments to continue their career in New Zealand at the end of training.

Ophthalmology training is popular in New Zealand and many more applicants apply than there are positions available, competition is therefore inevitable.

The selection panel has the following considerations for applicants to NZ.

1. New Zealand registrars are expected to be able to manage acute and emergency ophthalmic conditions in their first year and be able to immediately start their surgical training, so prior ophthalmic experience is favourable e.g. 6-12 months of acute clinic work and hands-on supervised procedures or clinics.
2. Clinical work in other specialties, even up to registrar level, are not a disadvantage.
3. A keen interest in Ophthalmology might be expected to be evident in the CV e.g.
4. collaborative research or audit projects that are published or presented at meetings, undergraduate electives or summer studentships.
5. Higher degrees or the Masters of Ophthalmic Science are not necessary for entry into the NZ program. However, their components may be considered to contribute to 1 or 3 above.

Factors assessed in order of importance are:

1. Employment history
2. References
3. Commitment to Ophthalmology evidenced by clinical and research work
4. Evidence of prior academic performance

Referees should know you well and think favourably of you. Negative comments from referees detract seriously from applications. You should approach potential referees early to discuss your career ambitions – they may have constructive advice. Referees should preferably be consultants or senior staff familiar with the requirements and demands of the VTP.

The interview questions are classifiable under the 7 CanMed capabilities. It may have a semi-OSCE style format to give candidates more opportunities to present themselves and still cover a good range of topics. Detailed individual feedback following selection is not provided.

The timing of the college selection process means that many of the other junior doctor posts are appointed before you will know the outcome of RANZCO selection. Applicants should carefully consider their 'plan B' with this in mind should they not be successful.

Repeat applications are assessed without prejudice, but the high standard of applications from year to year will mean that it will be just as competitive.

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