

Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Health

Te Kaunihera o Ngā Kāreti Rata o Aotearoa
Council of Medical Colleges in New Zealand

December 2023

Tēnā koe Minita Reti,

Welcome to your role as Minister of Health

This briefing is to provide you, as the incoming Minister, with information on the Council of Medical Colleges (CMC), our Member Colleges, and our contribution to quality healthcare for Aotearoa New Zealand.

About CMC

The Council of Medical Colleges is the collective voice for seventeen medical colleges in New Zealand, it's key focus is to ensure a safe, well-trained medical workforce, and in turn the highest quality medical care for Aotearoa New Zealand. CMC comprises members from all seventeen medical colleges, who in turn provide support to over 9000 medical practitioners working in a range of 34 specialties in the Aotearoa New Zealand health system.

Medical colleges are not-for-profit educational bodies responsible for the training, examination, and recertification of medical practitioners. The colleges also set standards for clinical practice.

CMC acts as a forum for the medical colleges to discuss issues of common interest, and to share knowledge, objectives, and policies. This forum supports collaboration and knowledge-exchange between colleges and health bodies to influence public policy - with a particular focus on health equity; eliminating racism and bias within health system structures; standards of care; and health workforce development.

CMC informs and advises key health sector groups, including yourself and other Ministers, government agencies, and other relevant bodies on health sector issues. CMC produces reports, papers, and position statements where there is collective agreement amongst our members. We undertake projects on specific issues at the direction of the Board of Trustees, in line with our Strategic Plan 2023-2026. We regularly make submissions on health sector consultations and government bills, particularly those related to patient safety, medical training, and workforce issues.

CMC is well placed to understand the unique challenges faced by medical professionals and to contribute to the provision of high quality and safe healthcare for Aotearoa New Zealand. CMC has good working relationships with key government agencies - including Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora, Te ORA, Te Tāhū Hauora Health Quality & Safety Commission and Mānatu Hauora Ministry of Health. It also has strong links with the Medical Council of New Zealand, the New Zealand Medical Students' Association, and the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges in Australia.

CMC is governed by a Board of Trustees who are elected and appointed from its member colleges. Currently the Board Chair is Dr Samantha Murton, a Wellington-based General Practitioner.

Current Priorities

CMC will continue to work with Government to address the current priority issues including:

ACHIEVING EQUITY

CMC advocates for a Te Tiriti compliant, culturally safe health system. We are committed to bringing about Pae Ora (healthy futures) and equitable health outcomes for Māori, by aligning with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and partnering with major stakeholders in Māori health.

We consider it essential to collect Māori health workforce data, and for the New Zealand health workforce to have equitable representation of Māori.

We acknowledge racism as a social determinant of health, and advocate for institutional racism and bias within health system structures to be eliminated.

In February 2023 CMC and Te Ohu Rata O Aotearoa launched the Cultural Safety Training Plan for Vocational Medicine, which is the first training plan of its type world-wide to be implemented into the curriculum of medical specialist training. CMC supports Colleges in their efforts to incorporate the Cultural Safety Training Plan into their vocational curricula.

The Cultural Safety Training Plan responds to the 2019 statement from the Medical Council of New Zealand that medical education in Aotearoa should include a focus on cultural safety. It builds upon the independent research findings on the current state of cultural safety and health equity delivered by doctors in Aotearoa New Zealand developed by Te ORA and the Medical Council of New Zealand in 2020.

WORKFORCE

CMC will advocate for a robust, well-trained, culturally safe health workforce that meets the needs of patients and whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand. We will also advocate for and collaborate on initiatives to support workforce well-being.

CMC supports efforts to over-represent Māori and Pacifica medical students and trainees to balance the effects of international medical graduates and to make sure we have a health system as diverse as the communities we serve.

We welcome efforts to increase the number of home-grown health practitioners, look after and retain our hard-working health workforce, and supplement our homegrown workforce with well-inducted and supported international recruits.

With an aging population and growing demand for increasingly complex healthcare services, the CMC considers it essential that we have a sustainable workforce to meet the health needs of our communities now and into the future.

BANNING DIRECT TO CONSUMER ADVERTISING OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

Thank you for your efforts throughout the passage of the Therapeutic Product Bill to propose a legislative ban on harmful direct to consumer advertising of prescription medicines (DTCA-PM). CMC considers that DTCA-PM can lead to increased costs, inappropriate prescribing, overtreatment and iatrogenic harm.

During the passage of the Therapeutic Products Bill, CMC hosted an open letter to the then-Health Minister Hon. Dr Ayesha Verrall, that was well supported - with nearly one thousand individual signatories plus a wide range of patient and consumer groups, health advocates, and senior national and international academics who joined the call for a legislative ban.

Your support in opposition was greatly appreciated by this group, and now we encourage you to seize the opportunity presented by the new Government's commitment to repeal the Therapeutic Products Act and legislate to ban harmful Direct to Consumer Advertising of Prescription Medicines.

Concerns

The Council of Medical Colleges are very concerned that the compromises of this coalition agreement may have serious impact on health outcomes for New Zealanders. In particular:

SMOKEFREE ENVIRONMENTS

Smoking kills. Nicotine is highly addictive. The repeal of the Smoke Free Environments Act and Regulated Products Act appears to be valuing money over lives.

Medical practitioners witness first-hand the preventable death and disease across the life course caused by smoked tobacco products; and the inequitable health outcomes that smoked tobacco products contribute to for Māori and Pasifika communities

When there is established worldwide evidence about the harm and addictive nature of smoking, repealing these Acts are the exact opposite of good governance of our healthcare system.

The Council of Medical Colleges expect that any amendments made to Smokefree Legislation will continue to reduce the use, and health impact, of smoked tobacco and nicotine products.

REVIEW OF MEDICAL ADMISSION SCHEMES AND RECOGNISING INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

The health workforce in New Zealand should reflect the population they serve. New Zealand has the highest number of international medical graduates in the OECD, and registered more than 1,000 doctors trained overseas last year and just over 500 domestic graduates.

Medical Council Data shows that Māori Doctors make up less than five percent of those who currently hold a practicing certificate, and Pasifika doctors make up around two percent.

Statistics New Zealand data shows that Māori make up 17 percent of our population, and those of Pasifika descent make up 9.1 percent.

The percentage of both Māori and Pasifika health workers does not reflect their percentage in the population, and continuing to rely on overseas trained doctors will dilute this further.

The Council of Medical Colleges supports efforts by initiatives like MAPAS and Otago's Mirror on Society to equitably represent Māori and Pasifika medical students and trainees to balance the effects of international medical graduates and to make sure we have a health system as diverse as the communities we serve.

The Council of Medical Colleges expect that any effort put into increasing the medical workforce will focus on growing our own, and that workforce will reflect the population they serve.

ABOLISHING THE MĀORI HEALTH AUTHORITY/TE AKA WHAI ORA

The CMC and its member colleges recognise Māori as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa's founding document, with its responsibilities and obligations.

The CMC considers a health sector that meets its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi is essential for achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori.

The CMC recognises the irrefutable evidence of Māori health inequity. Māori have poorer health outcomes than non-Māori with higher rates of morbidity and mortality across a range of health conditions. Māori are also more likely to experience racial discrimination in the health sector; experience more disadvantage from social determinants of health; and have lower access to health care. The CMC acknowledges that the ongoing impacts of colonisation; racism and social determinants of health are major contributing factors to inequitable health outcomes for Māori.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires the Crown to meet the health and wellbeing needs of Māori to the same extent as they do for any other New Zealanders. Compliance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi is fundamental to all government and non-government health sector organisations that operate in Aotearoa New Zealand. To achieve this it requires focused attention on the health outcomes for the Māori population.

The Council of Medical Colleges expect that any change in the structure of the health organisations will see a specific focus on improving Māori health outcomes, and this will be championed and a target for improvement. We want to work constructively with the Government to ensure that progress toward achieving equity in the health system is not lost during their reforms.

CMC Member Colleges

The Medical Colleges have many ideas on how to address the challenges facing the health system and enhance health care in New Zealand. They are realistic about the limits to health expenditure and are actively looking for ways to “do things differently”, to advise and assist the debate on these matters. The member colleges are:

- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)
- Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians (ACSEP)
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)
- College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand (CICM)
- New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM)
- New Zealand College of Musculoskeletal Medicine (NZCMM)
- New Zealand College of Sexual and Reproductive Health (NZCSRH)
- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA)
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR)
- Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA)
- Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP)
- Royal New Zealand College of Urgent Care (RNZCUC)

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