

# Working as a paediatrician

## New Zealand paediatrician talk about the reality of working within this field

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

There is huge variety in paediatrics, both in the range of conditions that you treat and in the age of the patients. The work is exciting, fast-paced and extremely rewarding. You feel like you can make a difference working with children. I love their creativity and spontaneity.

### **What strengths and abilities make a good paediatrician?**

You must like children and be approachable and able to communicate effectively with patients and their caregivers. It is important to be able to instil confidence in parents by being an effective communicator and developing a relationship with the child and the parents. You need to be resilient since you have to deal with tragic situations on a daily basis. You also need to be adaptable and well organised, and possess aptitude for learning procedural skills. Results aren't always immediate in this specialty.

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

A typical daily schedule for a hospital-based specialist would consist of ward rounds, outpatient consultations, meetings and paperwork. There are an increasing number of paediatricians who spend most of their time working in the community.

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

There is likely to be greater emphasis on outpatient work, and you should expect to complete some of your training within rural communities. For registrars and consultants there will be more opportunities made to accommodate lifestyle choices such as part time work or time out to have a family. An ongoing challenge that faces paediatrics (and all others in medicine) is the rapid pace of change - it is essential for practitioners to keep up-to-date with new developments.

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

Gain some paediatric experience as a house officer to ensure that you enjoy the specialty. In addition to paediatric medical rotations, runs that would be worthwhile considering include neonatal care, emergency medicine and paediatric surgery (including paediatric orthopaedics and paediatric ENT).

### **What are future opportunities in paediatrics?**

Specialists said that there are no guarantees of employment in this specialty but that the discipline is expanding so there is a good chance that you will find work.

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

It is possible to take time out of training for up to 24 months without having to do extra time. Training is different to employment and trainees need to make their own arrangements for extended periods of leave (apply for unpaid leave or resign and reapply for an RMO post on their return). Some overseas experience can be accredited as training as long as it has appropriate supervision and is applied for prospectively. This experience is often extremely valuable. Allowances for parental leave are generous. Part time work is possible, usually as a job-share arrangement.

Contributors commented that any specialty within the medical profession will have some negative impact on family life, and that paediatrics is no exception. On-call work varies according to the particular workplace and area of specialty, but is generally not too onerous. In general, paediatrics is considered to be reasonably family-friendly.

**What are the disadvantages of the paediatrics?**

The work can be stressful and demanding at times and it is relatively poorly remunerated. Employment is largely in the public system and there is only limited scope for private practice.

**Any comments on the current training?**

One registrar described the training programme as being flexible and well co-ordinated. Exposure to subspecialties is limited early in training due to intense competition for posts. An increasing number of fellowship jobs are becoming available to advanced trainees in the Auckland region.