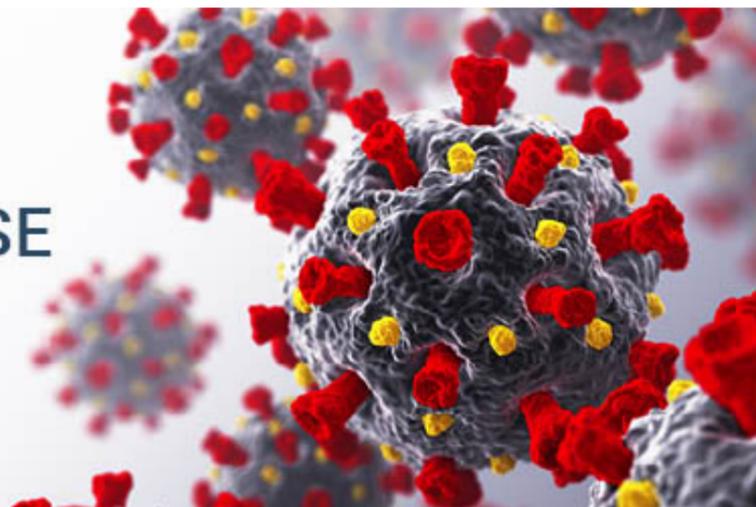


UPDATE

RACP COVID-19 RESPONSE



As at 29 April 2020

Advocacy

- The Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine has published guidance for members on the delivery of medication-assisted treatment of opioid dependence in response to COVID-19. The guidance is published on the [RACP website](#) and has been distributed to Health Ministers in all Australian jurisdictions.
- The Ethics Committee will be seeking approval to develop guidance on ethical issues for doctors dealing with COVID-19, including managing moral distress and the rights and duties of healthcare workers.
- **Personal Protective Equipment** – The College is engaging with the AHPPC in relation to advice on PPE.
- **Telehealth** – The College sought and received the clarification on MBS telehealth items from the Department of Health that:
 - both recognised specialist and consultant physician practitioners practicing in pain and palliative medicine, sexual health medicine and addiction medicine are able to bill consultant physician telehealth services (91824, 91825, 91826, 91834, 91835 and 91836)
 - occupational and environmental health medicine physicians are eligible to bill specialist telehealth services (91822, 91823, 91832, and 91833)
 - sexual health medicine, addiction medicine practitioners are able to bill telehealth services to prepare and review a management plan (92422, 92423, 92431 and 92432)
 - public health physicians are able to bill telehealth services (92513-92516 and 92521-92524).

The College is continuing to advocate for additional telehealth equivalent items for DFAC specific specialist attendances. The latest list of telehealth equivalent items available to members can be found on the [MBS Online website](#).

- **Contact tracing app** – The College was a joint signatory to a statement released by the Minister for Health and key medical groups supporting the *COVIDsafe* app.
- Deputy Chief Medical Officer of the Australian Department of Health, Professor Paul Kelly requested RACP members' assistance in managing the supply shortages of hydroxychloroquine, which was communicated to all Australian members. For more information please read the [letter from the Deputy Chief Medical Officer](#).

Advisory Groups – Whole of College

- The Expert Clinical Reference Group is currently reviewing its Terms of Reference to reflect its increased focus on advocacy and noting that the College Education Committee is overseeing College decisions in relation to exams, training and accreditation.
- The Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM) Faculty Policy and Advocacy Council (FPAC) along with two additional specialists have formed a Working Group which has prepared advice on pregnant health care workers that has been approved by the Expert Reference Group. The advice is now being reviewed by the AHPPC as per recent Government requirements. AFOEM is also preparing advice on the procedures for effective use of PPE.

Advisory Groups – Education Learning and Assessment

- An Examinations Advisory Meeting was held on 8 April and recommended that AFOEM exams also be postponed to 2021. The College Education Committee approved this on 24 April and communications will go out to trainees shortly.
- Clinical Exam Committees and Education staff are now working on proposals for how the DCE will be run in 2021 for the 2020 cohort and will discuss this at the next meeting of the Exams Advisory Group.
- The Sub-Group of Training and Accreditation Advisory Group has been established to determine how provisional progression into Advanced Training will work. A high-level approach has been agreed and circulated to all members of the Training and Accreditation Advisory Group for further feedback. A detailed approach is being worked through.
- Further guidance is being developed regarding the requirement for a research project, and will be circulated to all members of the Training and Accreditation Advisory Group for feedback
- The College Education Committee has endorsed a temporary delegation of authority for Training Committees to approve low-impact program specific interim changes to training programs in the 2020 training year in response to COVID-19 impacts. The required notice period for policy and program changes has also been temporarily relaxed to enable timely and appropriate responses.

- The [College COVID-19 education webpages](#) have been redesigned to support the various changes. A large number of [FAQs](#) have been drafted based on all the enquiries received to date and will be published on the website in the week of 27 April.
- A brief has been sent out-of-session to all committees/committee members who are responsible for training, accreditation or exams to direct them to the webpages for the latest information.
- A guide has been developed for working with individual Training Committees to review any additional program requirement changes they need to make during this clinical year due to COVID-19. Feedback gathered on the process at the Training and Accreditation Advisory Group meeting on the 17 April is now being piloted with several Training Committees, including a number of scenarios that are likely to be faced by trainees that each Training Committee needs to consider.
- A COVID-19 communications plan was approved by the College Education Committee on 24 April, which outlines the Education, Learning, and Assessment planned communication response to the impacts of COVID-19 for the next five months.

Professional Practice

Overseas Trained Physicians (OTPs)

- Following the recent changes to training requirements, the OTP Committee is considering a number of issues affecting OTPs undertaking their specialist assessment requirements in Australia.
- As many OTPs are unable to return home or sit AMC exams, the College is supporting those on the short-term training pathway to continue practicing in Australia.
- AHPRA streamlined the processes for OTPs, with current provisional or limited registration, to allow them to [change their registration circumstances](#) to be redeployed more easily during the COVID-19 crisis. The OTP Unit has modified its procedures to support this.
- The OTP Unit continues to expedite applications for OTPs currently in Australia with a job secured and is providing additional support to both health services and OTPs.

Note: The Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) is responsible for the OTP assessment process in Aotearoa New Zealand. The College remains engaged with MCNZ to support the process and provide recommendations as required.

Trainees

- FAQs addressing trainee concerns are being added to the website in the coming days.

Member Services

- Discussions are underway with the Australian Government regarding a presentation on a PPE RACP member information session.

Meetings

- **RACP Congress** – The Board made the decision to cancel RACP Congress 2020 and postpone Convocation, which were scheduled for May 2020. A cut-down 2020 virtual program will be delivered over Q3, Q4 2020 and Q1 2021; projected to commence delivery in June 2020. Any costs will be offset through sponsorship retained for virtual delivery. Congress 2021 Lead Fellow appointed as BAU.
- **Member meetings** – All face-to-face member meetings have been cancelled and replaced where possible with virtual meetings.
- **Aotearoa New Zealand Trainees Day** – Scheduled for 4 April cancelled and will be rescheduled for March 2021. Some sessions will be offered via webinar in late 2020.
- Aotearoa New Zealand Accreditation visits for April have been deferred to later in the year.
- A virtual PRACP handover ceremony is in development to take place on 4 May 2020.
- **COVID-19 member information sessions** – A series of webinars to guide Australian members in the use of telehealth, tele prescribing and taking them through COVID-19 stimulus packages are being presented on a regional basis with overwhelming interest from members. Many of these are being recorded and published on the [College COVID-19 webpage](#).

RACP Facilities and staff

- Sydney office spaces, including 145 Macquarie Street, Level 5 of 70 Phillip Street, and Level 19 Governor Macquarie Tower (College events space) have been closed until further notice.
- A sign-in register has been installed at 145 Macquarie Street to capture all contractors completing work onsite and essential staff that support these works with hand sanitiser stations installed throughout.
- All regional offices are closed until further notice.
- All Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand based staff are now working from home. Level 6 of 70 Macquarie Street and the Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington Office are 'by appointment' access sites only for essential work.
- All Aotearoa New Zealand staff have received VPN access. With Aotearoa New Zealand moving to Alert Level 3 on 27 April, work will recommence to progress the roll out of soft phones for staff in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Work is underway to assess threats to the RACP's supply chain caused by potential failures of key suppliers during the isolation period.
- There has been positive interaction with wellbeing resources and initiatives.

- People and Culture staff are conducting wellbeing checks with managers and for staff considered at risk of stress/anxiety/workload and referring onto EAP or other relevant services, where relevant.
- EAP check-in coordinated for those considered at high risk.
- RACP College Support program launched to maximise workforce contributions across the College. Ten staff are currently assisting teams with increased workloads on a full-time or part-time basis. Five additional staff have identified capacity to assist on a part-time basis and will be allocated projects in the coming week.
- The remote onboarding process for new team members is working well.

RACP Resources

- [Improving support for patients receiving treatment for opioid dependence during COVID-19 outbreak](#) (24 April)
- [COVID-19 pandemic may exacerbate existing inequalities in Aotearoa New Zealand](#) (24 April)
- [Interim guidance for the treatment of medication-assisted opioid therapy](#) (23 April 2020)
- [College COVID-19 webpage](#)
- [National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce – evidence-based clinical guidelines](#)