



RACP
Specialists. Together
EDUCATE ADVOCATE INNOVATE



Are you interested
in becoming a specialist in

**ADDICTION
MEDICINE?**

WHAT IS ADDICTION MEDICINE?

Addiction Medicine is the specialist practice that supports the care of individuals who experience addiction disorders. As a trainee in Addiction Medicine, you will develop expertise in the treatment of addiction disorders, and management of the physiological, psychological and social impacts associated with unhealthy substance use. Addiction Medicine training prioritises community health advocacy through participation in research and education, public health perspectives and policy development, and inclusive health service delivery.

SPECIALISTS IN ADDICTION MEDICINE

- Prevent and reduce harm caused by the non-medical use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
- Manage alcohol, drug, and other addiction problems.
- Connect with appropriate health care services and other support networks.
- Help patients improve their health and integration with the community.

Harm reduction is at the core of all Addiction Medicine interactions. Understanding what places a person at risk (vulnerability) and what keeps them strong (resilience) is the basis of a shared approach to reducing harm and enhancing wellbeing. Addiction Medicine specialists facilitate treatment participation opportunities that are evidence-based, relevant and meaningful to the individual, recognising the range of factors that contribute to health and wellbeing.

Addiction specialists are actively aware of social and cultural diversity. They can reflect upon their own culture and adapt their work style approach to fit the patient's needs. They strive for equitable outcome for patients who face multiple disadvantages (institutionalised

racism, rural/urban divide, multigenerational trauma/poverty etc) this includes supporting the individual patient and engaging in advocacy at institutional and public health level. Substance use is a vitally important area of medicine and public health which adversely impacts the population as a whole.

ADDICTION MEDICINE SPECIALISTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS

- Skill in patient engagement, clinical interview, physical examination and diagnosis to identify and negotiate management plans.
- Highly developed communication skills.
- Keen interest in understanding complex symptom assessment associated with substance use, including impacts on physical, psychological and social wellbeing.
- Sound knowledge of pharmacology of medications used within addiction medicine treatment.
- Ability to establish and maintain therapeutic relationships with patients and their families.
- Expertise developing effective management plans and treatment strategies that meet the health and wellbeing goals of the individual.
- Good management skills, leadership and effective collaboration within a multidisciplinary clinical team of healthcare professionals.
- A calm temperament in exercising of core addiction medicine skills.
- Skill managing challenging behaviour to facilitate safe and effective treatment participation.

HOW DO I BECOME A SPECIALIST IN ADDICTION MEDICINE?

Successful completion of the Chapter Training Program leads to the award of Fellowship of the Chapter (FACHAM), a specialist qualification in Australia.

Addiction medicine is a diverse specialty with experienced practitioners from many fields bringing their prior experience into training.

Training is of three years duration including a minimum of 18 months clinical work placements in accredited addiction medicine

positions. Trainees can apply to join the Training Program after completing the RACP basic training program and examinations or with a Fellowship from another approved clinical College in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand or an overseas equivalent recognised by the relevant College.

Addiction medicine is not currently recognised as a vocational scope of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and this is being address by the Medical Council New Zealand.



COMMENTS FROM CLINICIANS

1. Why did you choose this specialty and what do you most like about it?

I like the challenge of working in a multidisciplinary team environment where I have the opportunity to be involved in evidence based clinical work, teaching and research.

As a GP, I saw an increase in the number of patients presenting with addiction problems. GPs were ill equipped (time and knowledge wise) to manage these issues. I got tired of referring to various services that didn't quite help my patients, So, I rolled up my sleeves and decided to be part of the solution.

2. What does a daily schedule look like?

Demanding and challenging but very rewarding.

The day is diverse it often includes clinical care, research and service development.

3. What advice would you give to someone thinking about this specialty?

Talk with those who are actively involved in addiction medicine and drug and alcohol use. Get some firsthand experience by getting a job placement.

Talk to individuals who experience addiction and explore what have made a difference in their care. Consider a clinical attachment in your local service. In our experience, our colleagues are inspired to join us once they see the impact of the services we provide.

4. How did you find the training program?

It offers a diverse range of supervised training experiences in a range of clinical settings: hospitals, including consultation liaison services, community health centres, private clinics and, mental health clinics. Regular trainee workshops and educational sessions offer great opportunities for networking.

The training program allows you to explore different areas and settings in medicine, from internal medicine to obstetrics.

We have an engaging trainee group that meets once a week.

5. What is your opinion about opportunities in this area?

There are excellent career prospects in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and overseas because there is a shortage of specialists.

As a specialty we continue to grow and expand. The specialty allows you access job opportunities locally and internationally.

6. Are there any lifestyle benefits?

Addiction medicine offers a great work life balance, with a wide range of full-time, part-time, or job-share arrangements, as well as research and overseas work opportunities.

WHAT DOES THE CHAPTER DO?

The Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM) supports the professional careers of all Fellows and trainees of the Chapter. Alongside other relevant College Bodies and staff, the AChAM works on the following as they relate to addiction medicine:

- Education, training and assessment of trainees.
- Education, and continuing professional development.
- Assessment of overseas trained professionals.
- Policy and advocacy, research and community advocacy.
- Workforce development.

The AChAM Committee is the peak decision-making body for the Chapter, promoting and advancing the body of knowledge of addiction medicine within the College.

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO
[www.racp.edu.au/trainees/advanced-training/
advanced-training-programs/public-health-medicine](http://www.racp.edu.au/trainees/advanced-training/advanced-training-programs/public-health-medicine)