

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

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BURNOUT: DRIVING MEDICAL SPECIALISTS INTO EARLY RETIREMENT

From burn-out to early retirement to entrenched specialist shortages

While New Zealand Medical Council data indicates more medical specialists are working part-time, many continue to work long hours, which is contributing to significant staff burnout.

A survey of New Zealand hospital doctors published in 2004 found nearly 30% of respondents suffered psychological distress, with 10% classified as severe. The most frequent stressful situations reported were associated with work demands, commonly found in other studies.

A study involving 267 consultants at Canterbury DHB in 2006/07 found one in five had symptoms of high burnout, with long work hours and low job satisfaction being key contributory factors. A quarter of the respondents reported working longer than 60 hours per week.

International studies show burnout has major repercussions for patients and employers, including poorer patient care and higher staff turnover.

A survey of senior doctors working in Britain's NHS found less than a quarter of the respondents definitely intended to work in the NHS to normal retirement age; a reduction in workload or shorter working hours were reported as the greatest inducement to stay until normal retirement age.

Entrenched specialist workforce shortages in New Zealand are limiting the ability of DHBs to offer older specialists more flexible working arrangements. On current trends, nearly 20% of the workforce is likely to be lost through early retirement over the next five years.

For more on this, see *The Public Hospital Specialist Workforce: Entrenched shortages or workforce investment*, www.asms.org.nz

Kind Regards

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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The Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) represents salaried senior doctors and dentists. The large majority of our members are employed by DHBs. Outside the College of GPs we are the largest organisation representing doctors in New Zealand. Central to our existence is to promote the right of equal access for all New Zealanders to high quality public health services.

The ASMS publishes the ASMS Parliamentary Briefing to provide considered advice to MPs of issues and concerns where we believe we have the experience and expertise.

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