

# Working as a clinical geneticist

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

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

Work in this field enables you to combine the stimulating aspects of medical science with the roles of clinician and counsellor.

### **What strengths and abilities make a good clinical geneticist?**

It is important to be able to empathise with patients and to be adaptable and flexible, since no two clinics are ever the same.

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

Depending on the size of the department you work in, you may focus on area such as prenatal or cancer genetics or dysmorphology. Smaller centres require that you have a diversity of skills and are able to run a variety of clinics. Most work in this specialty is ambulatory and a reasonable amount involves community outreach services.

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

Clinical genetics is expanding with advances in technology. One particular challenge will be the impact of genotype on common complex disorders with genetic predisposition.

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

Clinical genetics offers exciting career opportunities. It is best to focus on a specific area (or areas) since it is impractical to be a 'generalist' geneticist.

### **What are future opportunities in clinical genetics?**

Clinical genetics offers opportunities for employment and experience throughout the world.

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

Work in clinical genetics can work in well with family life. Flexible training is usually available and there is relatively little ongoing clinical responsibility. There is not much on-call work.

One clinical geneticist said that she manages to balance her career with family life. Although travel is important to keep up to date with specialty changes, it is possible to do work out of hours if there is a family event that you are needed for during a work day.

### **What are the disadvantages of clinical genetics?**

Clinical genetics is a growth area so the infrastructure in New Zealand is not fully developed. As yet, the specialty is not officially recognised in this country for the purposes of vocational registration.

**Any comments on the current training?**

Training opportunities are somewhat limited in New Zealand.