

## Working as a radiologist



“Radiology is becoming one of the most integral specialities in medicine with ongoing new techniques and rapid advances in technology. It offers a wide scope of training with multiple areas of sub specialities in either diagnostic or interventional radiology. The 5-year training scheme is well structured and you are always well supported. The ongoing teaching environment is a huge aspect of the training and its one of the main reasons I chose the speciality. You are always treated as a colleague and well supported. If you enjoy intellectual challenges and like seeing a wide variety of cases radiology has a lot to offer”.

Dr Shady Osman, Radiology Registrar  
Middlemore Hospital

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

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

Radiology involves many procedures so suits those who like ‘hands-on’ work. The diagnostic aspect of this specialty is appealing and it is exciting to be on the leading edge of technological medicine. It is relatively easy to maintain a broad knowledge of medicine, although the specialty also provides scope to become involved in subspecialty areas such as paediatric radiology.

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

It is a myth that there is little patient contact in radiology. Communication skills are vital, since there is much one-on-one work with patients and you need to be able to deliver bad news in a sensitive way. You also need to be able to communicate effectively with colleagues and present information clearly and succinctly. The ability to interpret information swiftly is a necessary skill, although this often develops with experience and is not necessarily easy to ascertain in advance. It is an advantage to be able to think three-dimensionally with above average visual acuity and good hand eye coordination.

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

For a general radiologist, a daily schedule would typically involve various procedures such as CT scans, mammography, screening and ultrasound

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

There is likely to be a move from general radiology to subspecialties within the field. It will become increasingly important to keep up with rapid advances in technology such as PACS (Picture Archiving and Communication System) and digital and electronic technology - many of the images are now viewed on digital screens rather than film. The biggest threat to radiology is that doctors working in other areas (such as cardiology or vascular surgery) could take over part of the job, thereby

diminishing the role of the radiologist. However, there will continue to be a need for the specialist knowledge of radiologists and this need is likely to increase as the technology becomes more sophisticated.

The problem of litigation arising from undiagnosed cancers is increasing, particularly in mammography. There is always a risk of disciplinary action but this rarely occurs if the correct procedures are followed and if you maintain good relationships with patients and clinicians.

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

You should make yourself known to the members of the VTC to show that you are keen and enthusiastic. This is particularly important because no radiology runs are available to house officers. Keep in mind that they have time constraints also. If possible, you should attend some teaching sessions in the radiology department to get a feel for the discipline.

**What are future opportunities in radiology?**

There is an international shortage of radiologists so employment prospects are favourable. It is possible to work overseas and one third of radiologists who have trained in New Zealand now work in Australia

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

In comparison with some specialties it is relatively easy to take time out. However, it is recommended that you should not take too much time off because there is a risk that your skills may lapse. Most people delay starting a family until after they have completed training so that they can finish the programme with their peers.

The training programme is tough so there may be a big impact on family life while you are a registrar, but this is true of many specialties. Once training is completed the hours of work are reasonable and are clearly defined in the public sector. In private practice the hours tend to be longer but remuneration is greater.

**What are the disadvantages of radiology?**

There is a significant amount of administration in radiology.

**Any comments on the current training?**

House officers are encouraged to apply to various New Zealand centres because it is competitive to obtain a place on the Auckland training programme - there are usually 25 or so applicants for approximately seven places. New Zealand has an excellent international reputation for radiology and the Auckland Training programme is considered by contributors to be the best in the country. Many trainees seek overseas experience after completing the programme.