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Chair's message

My second term as Chair of the Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia (the National Board) expires at the end of June 2016 and I am pleased to have this opportunity to reflect on what it has meant to me, and the progress the Board has made over the last five years.

It has been a unique opportunity and an honour for me to have chaired the Board during this period. We have set registration standards for Australian and international applicants for registration under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme), we have consulted widely, and through the work of our Accreditation Committee we are well advanced in approving national Medical Radiation Science courses.

We have managed the notification and immediate actions that have been reported to the Board, and we have worked towards informing practitioners of the requirements of mandatory notifications.

We have recently had the first candidates sit our online exam, which gives us another option for assessing overseas applicants. Mark Marcenko has chaired the Examination Committee and without his drive and persistence, this exam would not be the success that it is.

Through sound financial management we have reduced the annual registration fee three years running, to a level well below that of pre-National Scheme days.

I am very grateful for the great support and friendship that I have received from Board members during my term, and I believe that without their hard work and vision we would not have been able to make the changes and improvements that we have.

I have been very fortunate to have been greatly supported by the Executive Officer of the Board, Mr Adam Reinhard, who has advised me and the Board through its many deliberations and decisions. Adam and I have communicated almost daily and I am grateful for his wisdom and tact in letting me think that the best ideas were mine. When I thought that I was under the pump, I knew that Adam was still one step ahead and working harder. I will miss our discussions and work to make things better.

Working as a part of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) team has been a pleasure, and I acknowledge the support and friendship of Martin Fletcher (CEO) and Chris Robertson (Executive Director Strategy and Policy), and the many staff who help make the National Scheme work.

I have been fortunate to have met many practitioners during my time as Chair and I am confident that the new generations of medical radiation practitioners (MRPs) have a great deal to offer the profession, and I believe that the work of the Board will help make that possible.

My work on the Board has been made more enjoyable because of the support of my fiancé, and I thank her and look forward to the next phase of my life.

Neil Hicks

Chair, Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia

National medical radiation practice exam

The first cohort of overseas candidates has completed the national medical radiation practice (MRP) exam developed by the Board. The exam is based on the Professional capabilities for medical radiation practice, which describes the entry-level professional capabilities for the three divisions of medical radiation practice.

The exam was extensively fine-tuned to make sure it reflects the minimum capabilities for competent practice, and was first tested on about 40 students as a trial to validate the 75% pass mark.

The Board may use an exam:

- before deciding an application for registration
- where a practitioner is not qualified for general registration
- where a practitioner is returning to practice after an extended break from practice
- where there are concerns about a supervised practitioner's capacity for safe practise, or
- for practitioners who are granted limited registration.

The Board has decided to schedule three exam sittings each year, so that practitioners can plan ahead.

For further details please see the National MRP Exam [webpage](#) on the Board's website.

Medical radiation practitioner disqualified from practice

A tribunal recently reprimanded a medical radiation practitioner, disqualified him from applying for registration for a period of 18 months and ordered him to pay \$1,800 in costs to the Board.

The tribunal found that Mr Pei Ren Un had failed to practise in accordance with the [Code of conduct](#) for medical radiation practitioners by engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviour towards a female patient.

For more information, see the [news item](#) on the Board's website.

Medical radiation practice regulation at work in Australia 2014/15

The Board has released its profession-specific report for 2014/15; here are some of the highlights:

- Registration fees reduced by \$45, the third year in a row that there has been a reduction.
- 14,866 medical radiation practitioners in Australia on 30 June 2015.
- 48% of medical radiation practitioners are aged under 35.
- Audit in August 2014 showed a 94% level of compliance with standards for the profession.
- 31 notifications were received about medical radiation practitioners – 21 were lodged outside of NSW.
- Four cases of immediate action during the year.
- 53% of closed notifications in 2014/15 (excluding New South Wales) led to no further action.
- 535 medical radiation practitioners under active monitoring - 97% in relation to suitability/eligibility.

To download a copy of the [report](#), go to the Board's website.

The Board has also released quarterly registration data on its [Statistics page](#).

Consolidation of the nine National Boards with low regulatory workloads

In August 2015 the report of the independent three-year review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) was released.

There were 33 recommendations, and these were grouped around five major areas; one of which related to the consolidation of the nine low-regulatory-workload National Boards in the National Scheme. Our Board is one of these nine Boards.

Health ministers met in April 2016 and decided not to consolidate these nine National Boards at this stage.

Further details on the ministers' decision can be found on the [COAG Health Council website](#).

Using the title 'specialist' is not permitted

Using the title 'specialist' is not permitted as a registered medical radiation practitioner.

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in every state and territory (the National Law) 'specialist registration' may only occur when the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council has approved a registration standard for specialist registration in the profession. At this time there is no specialist registration for medical radiation practitioners.

A registered health practitioner who does not hold specialist registration may not use the title 'specialist', nor, through advertising or in any other way, present themselves to the public as holding specialist registration in a health profession.

This means that medical radiation practitioners must not use the word 'specialist' in any title or use other words that create the impression that a medical radiation practitioner has specialist registration.

However, all registered medical radiation practitioners can use a protected title that applies to them. Protected titles for medical radiation practice include the following:

- medical radiation practitioner
- diagnostic radiographer
- medical imaging technologist
- radiographer
- nuclear medicine scientist
- nuclear medicine technologist, and
- radiation therapist.

It is also often acceptable for registered practitioners to list their qualifications; see section 7.2 of the Board's [Guidelines for advertising regulated health services](#).

While the National Law protects these specific titles, the use of some words (such as 'specialises in') may be misleading or deceptive, as patients can interpret them as implying that the practitioner is more skilled or has greater experience than is the case.

These words should be used with caution and need to be supported by fact. Words such as 'substantial experience in' or 'working primarily in' are less likely to be misunderstood as a reference to specialist registration.

Some practitioners call themselves a 'CT radiographer' or an 'MRI technologist', which conveys an area in which the practitioner is either currently working or has some degree of experience. However, it is not acceptable to use words that may imply specialist registration such as 'specialist CT radiographer' or 'specialist MRI technologist'.

National Scheme news

Reporting of health practitioners by their treating practitioner under Australia's national mandatory reporting law

Melbourne researcher Marie Bismark and her colleagues have recently published an analysis of reports about health (medical) practitioners made by their treating practitioners under Australia's new mandatory reporting system. The results challenge some frequently expressed assumptions.

They used retrospective case-file review and analysis of treating practitioner reports received by AHPRA between 1 November 2011 and 31 January 2013, and of the outcomes of the completed investigations of these reports to November 2014.

Their main outcome measures were the characteristics of treating practitioners and reported practitioners; nature of the care relationship; grounds for report; and regulatory action taken in response to report.

Of 846 mandatory reports about medical practitioners, 64 (8%) were by treating practitioners. A minority of reports (14 of 64) were made by a practitioner-patient's regular care provider; most (50 of 64) arose from an encounter during an acute admission, first assessment or informal corridor consultation.

The reported practitioner-patients were typically being treated for mental illness (28 of 64) or substance misuse (25 of 64). In 80% of reports (50 of 64), reporters described practitioner-patients who exhibited diminished insight, dishonesty, disregard for patient safety, or an intention to self-harm.

Conclusions

The nature and circumstances of the typical treating practitioner report challenge assumptions expressed in policy debates about the merits of the new mandatory reporting law. Mandatory reports by treating practitioners are rare. The typical report is about substance misuse or mental illness, is made by a doctor who is not the patient's regular care provider, and identifies an impediment to safely managing the risk posed by the practitioner-patient within the confines of the treating relationship.

The full report is available online: *Reporting of health practitioners by their treating practitioner under Australia's national mandatory reporting law* - Marie M Bismark, Matthew Spittal, Jennifer Morris, David Studdert: [Medical Journal of Australia, January 2016](#).

Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit the [Medical Radiation Practice Board](#) website for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ. Visiting the website regularly is the best way to stay in touch with news and updates from the Board.
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (for overseas callers).
- To update your contact details for important registration renewal emails and other Board updates, go to the AHPRA website: [Update contact details](#).
- Address mail correspondence to: Neil Hicks, Chair, Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.