

Thinking of Musculoskeletal Medicine

Musculoskeletal Medicine specialises in the management of painful musculoskeletal disorders arising from disease, degeneration or injury. It is based on a thorough knowledge of anatomy, biomechanics, neurobiology, relevant pathology, psychological and psychosocial determinants of pain, and particularly, chronic pain. Musculoskeletal Medicine specialists work primarily in the community, or in community based DHB clinics. This is a small specialty with room to grow. Any centre in New Zealand could easily accommodate, and would welcome, more practitioners. The specialty lends itself to those graduates seeking a “work/life” balance. Training is part time in the early stages, so having additional work-streams for income may be necessary.

Overview of Musculoskeletal Medicine

Specialists in musculoskeletal medicine have particular expertise in the diagnosis and management of painful conditions involving the skeletal structures. This expertise is based on the ability to take a thorough pain history, undertake the examination, and interpretation of relevant imaging (or other special tests) in the context of that patient’s clinical condition. Management is varied and can accommodate a range of therapeutic options, depending on the specialist’s interests. The strengths of a musculoskeletal specialist are in their communication with, and education of their patients regarding the nature of their condition, the management options and the evidence basis for those.

Further strengths are the implementation of appropriate rehabilitation programs, pharmaceutical management, manual therapy, physical therapies, exercise prescriptions and Interventional Pain Management (image-guided spinal and peripheral injections). Advanced courses teaching image guided spinal injection techniques for the precision diagnosis or treatment of some spinal disorders are available upon completion of the basic training.

Musculoskeletal Medicine arose in New Zealand in the early 1980’s in response to a NZ Government commissioned report on chiropractic management. While the report delivered recommendations that only Chiropractors and Osteopaths should practice Manual Therapy, a group of General practitioners and several rheumatologists interested in the potential of Manual Medicine challenged this recommendation. As a consequence the Otago University became the first western university in the world to offer a Post-graduate Diploma in Musculoskeletal Medicine. By 1995, the Australasian Faculty of Musculoskeletal Medicine was incorporated and this Faculty developed evidence based guidelines for the management of musculoskeletal pain and musculoskeletal disorders. In 1999, the New Zealand Association Musculoskeletal Medicine was gazetted by Parliament as the accrediting body for vocational registration in Musculoskeletal Medicine.

As a medical specialty, Musculoskeletal Medicine is only recognised in New Zealand and the qualification is not recognised elsewhere, including in Australia. It is a young, evolving specialty with much to offer.

Specialty Training

Pre-vocational Requirements:

- Hold a Medical Degree and meet the MCNZ requirements to work in a General or Vocational Scope of Practice. Ie at least two years post graduate experience

The process to accreditation includes:

- Part A: Completion of specific papers from an Approved Postgraduate Diploma of Musculoskeletal Medicine or Pain Medicine from an Australian or a New Zealand University.
- Part B: Clinical Training Program. Upon completion of the Clinical Training Programme, the candidate is invited to sit the Final Examinations.

Part A and Part B can be completed concurrently.

Expected duration of training: 4 years (but this could be reduced depending on prior experience)

Training is by rotation through established musculoskeletal clinics, outpatient and other specialty clinics, distance learning, training and general musculoskeletal retreats, self-directed learning and completion of the required papers from the Otago University Diploma and Masters of Pain Medicine courses.

Personal qualities required to be a Musculoskeletal Pain Specialist

- an open and enquiring mind
- excellent interpersonal skills and enjoy working with people
- being able to manage distressed patients for whom there may be no long term resolution of their pain
- excellent communication skills and an interest in education of patients, peers and other medical colleagues
- ability to work in a solo practice with collegial supports, but being mindful of one's own limitations and when to seek advice
- a commitment to safe, evidence based practice
- self motivated ongoing learning and upskilling

Specialty Training Programme Information

Medical Faculty:

[New Zealand Association Musculoskeletal Medicine](#) in conjunction with the [Australasian Faculty of Musculoskeletal Medicine](#)

Fellowship/Qualification:

Certificate of Attainment in Musculoskeletal Medicine is awarded by the New Zealand Association Musculoskeletal Medicine on recommendation from the Australasian Faculty of Musculoskeletal Medicine. It is the New Zealand Association Musculoskeletal Medicine that is the gazetted vocational accrediting body recognised by the Medical Council of New Zealand. The Australasian Faculty of Musculoskeletal Medicine provides and oversees the training and sets the examinations.

Recognition of Prior Learning:

The requirements of the Australasian Faculty of Musculoskeletal Medicine training programme can be tailored to recognise prior learning. This would be on an individual case by case assessment by the Board of Censors and Faculty training officers, upon application to train.

Entry requirements	Application process	Selection criteria
<p>To be eligible for entry to the programme, potential candidates must hold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MBBS, MBChB qualifications gained at a University approved by the MCNZ• Full Registration with the MCNZ• Annual Practising Certificate• Completed Post-graduate years 1 and 2 (PGY1 & 2)• Membership of Medical Protection Society or other professional indemnity insurance.• References from two Referees.• Passes in Papers MSME 701 (Clinical Diagnosis) and MSME 711 (Pain Assessment) offered in the Postgraduate Diploma of Musculoskeletal Medicine at the University of Otago.	<p>An 'Application to do the Training Course' can be made after:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete Postgraduate Diploma of Musculoskeletal Medicine papers MSME701 & MSME7112. Become a member of NZ Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine3. Apply to do Training Course4. Interview<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Will be a structured interview following a Faculty developed protocolb. Panel of Three from Board of Censors/Training Committee, or if by telecommunication, preferably with one panel member personally present	<p>In addition to the criteria, selection into the training program will depend on the outcome of the submitted application, curriculum vitae, structured interview, prior experience, referee statements and personal attributes</p>

Examination requirements:

Upon completion of Part A & B of the training program, the candidate will be invited to sit the examinations. These are in two parts: two multi-choice papers (Clinical Sciences and Clinical Applications) and a Clinical Examination.

Transferability of registration in Musculoskeletal Medicine to other countries:

There is no transferability – the vocational registration is unique to New Zealand

Further information can be obtained on the [Royal Australasian College of Physicians \(RACP\)](#) website

Resident Medical Officer (RMO) Information

- Demand for Vocational Training Posts is not available
- There are currently no RMO training registrar positions contracted

Northern:

Northland, Waitemata, Auckland, Counties Manukau DHBs

Midland:

Lakes, Tairāwhiti, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Taranaki DHBs

Central:

Hawke's Bay, Wanganui, MidCentral, Wairarapa, Capital and Coast, Hutt Valley DHBs

South Island:

Nelson Marlborough, Canterbury, South Canterbury, Southern, West Coast DHBs

Medical Council: 20

Musculoskeletal Physicians by Region (September 2015 SMO census)

Northern		Midland		Central		Southern		Total	
FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount	FTE	Headcount
0.5	2	0	0	0	0	1.1	3	1.6	5

1 FTE is 40 hours