

2007 GP Workforce Snapshot - Victoria

Otway Division of General Practice

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Introduction

The Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) collects information on the rural GP workforce to assist with the recruitment and retention of GPs in rural practices.

Information is collected on an ongoing basis from several sources¹ including RWAV's annual survey of GPs and practices. Our GP and practice survey is distributed in September to all GPs and practices in Victoria within the boundaries of the rural Divisions of General Practice.

This report contains information on the demographics and workforce participation of the rural GP workforce and the composition of medical practices in towns within the Otway Division of General Practice (ODGP).

RWAV would like to thank the rural Divisions of General Practice for their continued support and assistance with the GP and practice survey.

Highlights²

- 101 GPs (105 full-time equivalent GPs) work principally within the Division – which is 9% of the rural GP workforce
- The Division has approximately 9% of the rural Victorian population and has an estimated 1 GP per 1,173 residents
- GPs within the Division are ageing – the average age of GPs is 50.4 years (rural Victorian average is 49.5 years)
- The average length of time GPs within the Division have worked in their current practice is 13.1 years
- 27% of GPs within the Division hope to reduce their hours within the next 5 years
- There are 32 practices within the Division, of which 44% are solo practices

1) Data sources include the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria online list of medical practitioners, Divisions of General Practice, contact with practitioners and other medical practice staff, RWAV's annual telephone survey of practices and RWAV's annual mail survey of GPs and practices.

2) The information in this report was current as at 30 November 2007.

Rural GP workforce profile

There are 1,220 GPs practising in rural³ Victoria. Of these, 140 (11%) are registrars.

This section presents information on the demographics of the permanent GP workforce within ODGP. As the placement terms of GP registrars are short term – typically ranging from six to twelve months, they are not part of the permanent workforce and thus have not been included in this section.

Nine percent (9%) of the rural Victorian GP workforce work principally in a location within ODGP, and the Division covers approximately 9% of the total rural Victorian population. This equates to 1 GP to every 1,173 residents.

The number of rural GPs (headcount and full-time equivalent - FTE) within the Division is presented in Table 1.

FTE values were created based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of full-time work - which is 35 or more hours per week. For GPs this would equate to 9 or more sessions per week of 3.9 hours in duration⁴. Please note that the FTE calculation is based on clinical hours worked in GP practices only, not total hours worked in all settings.

A profile of the GP workforce within the Division, by Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA), gender, age and country of qualification, is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Headcount and FTE of rural GPs within ODGP

	Headcount	FTE
Otway DGP	101	105

Table 2: Profile of rural GPs within ODGP (N=101)

RRMA		
3		
4	59	58%
5	42	42%
7		
Gender		
Males	75	74%
Females	26	26%
Age (years), mean*		
Males	51.4	
Females	47.6	
Overall	50.4	
*Missing age data for 7 GPs (4 males and 3 females)		
Country of qualification		
Australian graduates	68	67%
International graduates	33	33%

3) Defined as Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) three to seven classified locations.

4) Consistent with this, the average session length reported by GPs in RWAVs 2007 GP survey is 3.9 hours.

The gender composition of the GP workforce within the Division differs slightly to that of rural Victoria overall. Females comprise just over one-quarter (26%) of the workforce within ODGP, which is slightly less than rural Victoria overall (where females comprise 30% of the GP workforce).

Consistent with rural Victoria overall, female GPs are, on average younger than their male counterparts. However, the average age of GPs within the Division is slightly older (50.4 years compared to 49.5 years for GPs across rural Victoria).

The distribution of male and female GPs across age groups is displayed in Figure 1.

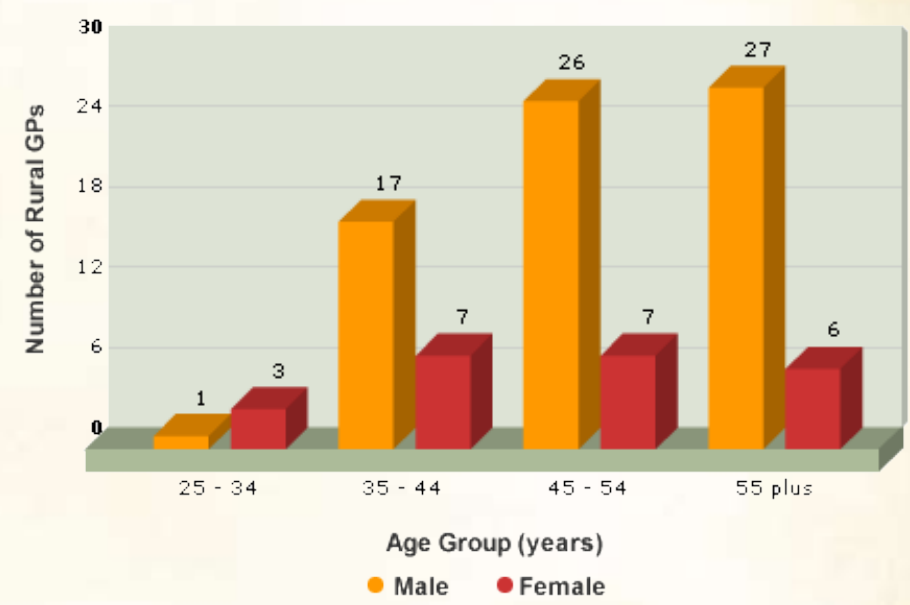
Across rural Victoria overall, the highest number of GPs is in the 45 to 54 year age group. The Division however has an equal number of GPs in the 45 to 54 year age group as the 55 year plus age group.

Proportionally, compared to rural Victoria overall, the Division has fewer GPs aged 45 to 54 years (35% compared to 44%), but more GPs aged over 55 (35% compared to 27%).

It can be seen in Figure 1 that the relative proportion of males to females is higher in all age groups except for the youngest (25 - 34) age group.

This is a pattern seen across rural Victoria, with male doctors predominating in older age groups and female doctors in the majority in the youngest age group - reflecting higher female intakes into Medical Schools over recent years⁵.

Figure 1: Composition of the rural GP workforce within ODGP by gender and age groups (N=94)



International Medical Graduates

The proportion of GPs within ODGP who gained their qualification overseas is consistent with rural Victoria overall (where IMGs comprise 34% of the GP workforce).

The IMGs practising within the Division gained their basic medical qualification from 13 different countries - with the largest proportion trained in the United Kingdom and Ireland (15% combined).

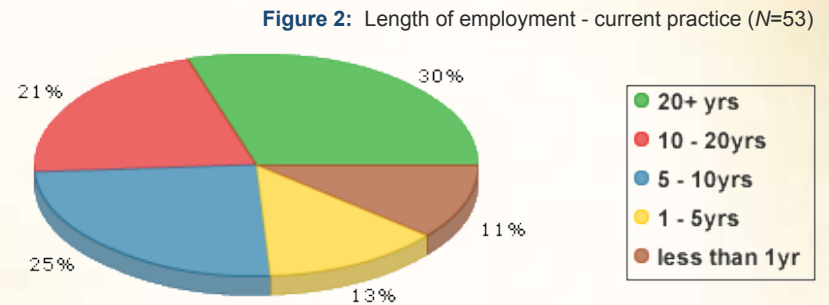
⁵) Females comprised 55.2% of domestic medical students in 2000, 57.3% in 2004 and 55.7% in 2006.
 SOURCE: Medical Training Review Panel (2007) Eleventh report. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing.

2007 GP survey results⁶

Length of employment

The average length of time GPs within ODGP have worked at their current practice is 13.1 years.

Just over half (51%) of GPs within the Division have worked at their current practice for more than 10 years (Figure 2). Most commonly, GPs have worked at their current practice for more than 20 years (30%) - suggesting quite stable patterns of GP availability within the Division.

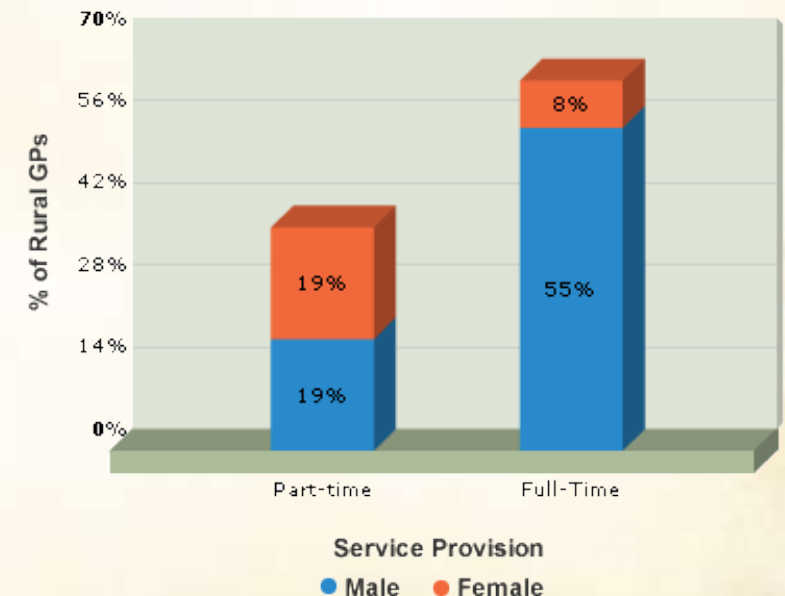


Full-time and part-time service provision

ABS definitions of full-time work (35 or more hours per week) and part-time work (less than 35 hours per week) were used to estimate service provision, based on weekly clinical GP hours (self-reported)⁷. The data is presented in Figure 3.

Within the Division 62% of GP respondents work full-time, and the majority (88%) of full-time practitioners are male. This compares to 65% full-time and 35% part-time for GPs across rural Victoria.

Figure 3: Full time and part-time service provision by gender (N=53)



6) This section presents information on GPs within ODGP who responded to the 2007 GP survey (N=53), excluding registrars

7) Based on clinical hours worked in practices and not total hours worked i.e. does not include time spent in other settings (e.g. hospitals) or performing other roles (e.g. teaching).

Hours worked

The average total hours worked per week by GPs within ODGP is 46.7 hours (compared to 44.3 hours for GPs across rural Victoria). On average, male practitioners report working longer hours than female practitioners (48.9 hours compared to 40.6 hours respectively). Total hours includes: clinical GP work, routine hospital work, teaching and supervising, GP representative work, travelling between practices and any other medical roles and activities, but does not include on call work.

Hospital VMO rights

Eighty nine percent (89%) of GP respondents within ODGP have hospital Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) rights.

Procedural work

Forty five percent (45%) of GP respondents within ODGP regularly undertake procedural work. The overwhelming majority (83%) of these are male. This includes: anaesthetics - regional and general, obstetrics - normal deliveries, lower segment caesarean section (LSCS) and non-LSCS, and operative surgery.

Emergency care and Aboriginal health

Two-thirds (66%) of GPs within the Division report that they regularly provide emergency care, and 19% report that they regularly practise Aboriginal health.

Future intentions

When asked how long they intend to remain in their current location, GPs within the Division predominately report a period greater than 5 years. GPs most commonly report a period of 5 to 10 years (43%) and 18% report a period of 10 or more years.

Thirty nine percent (39%) of GP respondents intend to remain in their current location for less than 5 years. Almost one-quarter (23%) intend to stay for between 3 and 5 years, 9% for 1 to 3 years and 7% for less than 1 year.

Just over half (51%) of GP respondents hope to make changes to their workforce participation within the next 5 years. Thirty eight percent (38%) are not expecting to make any changes, while 11% are unsure.

Of those who hope to make changes, just over half (52%) want to reduce their hours.

This information places a high need for aggressive recruitment strategies for this Division to ensure that those GPs reducing their hours are adequately replaced.

Practices

There are 32 GP practices within ODGP. Forty four percent (44%) of these are solo practices (refer to Table 3).

Of the 101 rural GPs within the Division:

- 15% work principally in solo practice
- 29% work principally in a group practice with four or fewer (principally based) GPs
- 56% work principally in a group practice with five or more (principally based) GPs.

Within the Division, GPs also provide services to: 6 branch practices, 2 Community Health Centres and 1 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

Practice ownership

Respondents to the practice survey⁸ most commonly reported practice ownership as individual (48%) or partnership (22%).

Other health professionals

Thirty nine percent (39%) of practices report that they have allied health professionals working at the practice, and 78% report that they have a nurse working at the practice.

Sites with a practice nurse were asked to indicate which services the nurse provides. Responses are summarised in Table 4.

Table 3: Practice types

Division of General Practice	Group	Solo	Total
Otway DGP	18	14	32
% of total Victoria rural practices	8%	14%	10%

Table 4: Services provided by practice nurses (N=18)

Type of service	Practices with this service	%
Assistance with procedures	15	83%
Asthma education	8	44%
Diabetes education	8	44%
Extended consultations	5	28%
Immunisation	14	78%
Nutrition (dietary advice)	4	22%
Pathology	6	33%
Women's health	5	28%

8) A response to the practice survey was received from 23 rural GP practices within ODGP