



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL  
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUIORA O AOTEAROA

**MSC  
NEWS**

## TE HEAMANA|FROM THE CHAIR

Tēnā koutou katoa

This year has the distinction of appearing to be both long and short, depending on whether you've been waiting for outcomes or have been working to provide them; from the MSC perspective at least. Managing the scope of practice reviews for both professions (Anaesthetic Technicians - now in the closing stages, and Medical Laboratory Science - having completed the initial expressions of interest phase) has been challenging. This is in terms of resourcing and the time involved in ensuring those affected are engaged with and have an opportunity to be heard.



On behalf of the MSC, I would like to thank all those practitioners who have taken the time to provide their thoughts and suggestions regarding these reviews, either through correspondence or in person. Members of the Council who have attended various professional meetings and conferences this year talked about the level of engagement and enquiry from practitioners, and we would encourage you to continue to engage and question. This enables a better representation of information that we use as we work to meet our obligations under the Act.

It also comes as no surprise to practitioners that we're amid healthcare system stress and change. Challenging times that often reveal both the good and not so good aspects of our work. In all circumstances, we understand that practitioners are doing the best they can to make sure members of the public are safe in the care they provide. We'd urge practitioners to monitor their own health too, and practise appropriate selfcare where needed.

As mentioned in the annual report this has been against a backdrop of increasing registration numbers across both professions, development of expert advisory groups, the sourcing of a replacement customer relationship management system, and hosting visitors from the Malaysian Ministry of Health – more on those further along in the newsletter.

Because this is my last newsletter as Chair, I'm taking the opportunity to thank the many practitioners I have met who have taken the time to speak with me, to ask the tough questions, and engage with the Council as a whole. I also thank my fellow Council members for their hard work, professionalism, wealth of knowledge and good humour in going about our task, all of which would be more difficult without the support of the MSS team who diligently ensure we are prepared to perform our roles – I am privileged to have been given your confidence and expertise.

CONTENTS: MESSAGES FROM THE CHAIR AND THE CE | TE AMA TŌTIKA – MĀORI PRACTITIONERS' HUI 2025 - OPEN FOR REGISTRATION, AND A CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST | MIKE (OUR CONSULTANT ON ALL THINGS TE REO AND TE AO MĀORI) AWARDED KING'S SERVICE ORDER | PROPOSED FEE CHANGES – CONSULTATION | EXPERT ADVICE SOUGHT – MLS SOP | BECOMING A MED LAB SCIENTIST – WHY NOT? | INFORMATION ABOUT AN EXCITING CHANGE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU | WE'RE REVIEWING THE EXAM – SURVEY | VISITORS FROM THE MALAYSIAN MOH | VIEW HEALTH AND DISABILITY SERVICES RIGHTS | ABOUT APCs AND BULK FUNDING | OUR OFFICE IS CLOSED – OVER THE HOLIDAYS.

**COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PROTECT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC BY ENSURING PRACTITIONERS REGISTERED WITH THE COUNCIL ARE COMPETENT AND FIT TO PRACTISE.**

**cont.,**

With little of the year remaining, I wish you all a safe and happy holiday period and thank those practitioners working through, allowing the rest of us to spend a much-deserved break with friends and family.

Ngā mihi mō ngā tau kei mua i te aroaro. Good luck for the future everyone.

Ngā mihi nui

Brett Besley | **MSC Chair**

---

## Message from the Chief Executive



Kia ora koutou

Welcome to the final newsletter for 2024. This has been a big and busy year.

Firstly, welcome to all recent graduates who have completed their programmes of education and are applying for registration in their respective professions and scopes. This is a significant achievement, and we wish you well in your chosen career. The Council has several documents that are relevant for your practice, and you can view them here: Competence standards for ATs and MLS, Scopes of practice for ATs and MLS, and Code of ethical conduct for ATs and MLS. They're available on the website under Resources.

Our annual report for 2023-2024 showed an increase in registrations across both professions and this trend has continued over 2024. Approved registrations since 1 April 2024 within the medical laboratory sciences scopes are 15% above the same period in 2023, and for anaesthetic technicians there is an increase of 71% (25 practitioners). Recent figures show the total number of practitioners with practising certificates is between 1-2% higher than 31 March 2024. These figures exclude our recent graduates.

As our Chair Brett said, the Council members have had a busy year. We've attended several conferences and engaged with a number of stakeholders during the year. These are great opportunities to discuss matters of common interest, and to look at and consider our regulatory role.

The review of the scope of practice and competence standards for anaesthetic technicians is one of the key strategic projects that's being undertaken by the Council. During 2024 we have consulted on the scope and competence standards as well as developing policy and resources around the supervision of newly qualified practitioners. The Expert Advisory Group appointed by the Council provided it with sound advice and guidance and we thank them for that. The work around the scope has been considered by the Council and we are moving to finalise this soon. Resources for supervision, and the policy, will be uploaded onto our website in the near future. We encourage anyone with an interest in supervision to look at these resources. A small group has been convened to review the Standards of Accreditation and we expect work to progress on this in early 2025.

Work has now begun in earnest on the review of the scope of practice for medical laboratory scientists. An expert advisory group representing all scopes has been convened and will meet in Wellington in 2025 to start this project. We will provide you with updates as the work progresses.

The Council has been working with Te Ama Tōtika, its Māori Practitioner Advisory Committee, during 2024 who have provided the Council with advice around the anaesthetic technician scope and competencies. This rōpū will also be involved in providing advice to the Council regarding the Medical Laboratory Science scope of practice and competencies. In collaboration with the Council a hui for Māori practitioners has been scheduled for February 2025 – more on that in the newsletter.

Finally, I acknowledge the team at MSS who work behind the scenes undertaking the mahi of the Council. This year has been extremely productive. Not only have we worked on projects around practice, but we've also engaged with numbers of practitioners, accredited and monitored programmes of education, managed complaints and issues of practitioner competence and health, as well as undertaking consultations and issuing record numbers of practising certificates. We've also begun a large project to replace our database. This will continue into early 2025 and will mean that we can streamline many of our policies and processes,

making the application and renewal process easier for practitioners. There's more on that in the newsletter and we'll keep you updated as work progresses.

I also acknowledge Brett who's advised that this is his last term as Council Chair (he is staying onboard as a Council member). Over the last two years Brett has provided me with advice and guidance about what it means to be an anaesthetic technician and what the impact of our regulations means. He has led the Council through periods of change and has not been shy to front our webinars so that members of the professions can know and understand the Council's position. I also acknowledge the Council members; as Governors they set the direction for the professions, and we value the wealth of experience they bring to the table as practitioners and as lay members.

Thank you all once again for everything that you do for the health system here in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a multi-profession regulator, the Medical Sciences Council is in the unique position of regulating practitioners whose roles are quite different, but who make a big impact on care received by consumers of health services. We know and understand that many of you will continue to work over the festive season – thank you – and we hope that you do get the opportunity to spend some time with friends and whānau. We look forward to progressing our regulatory work for your professions in 2025.

Ngā mihi

Dr Susan Calvert | **Chief Executive - Medical Sciences**

**Secretariat**

---

## Who's who

The Council works very closely with another health responsible authority, Te Poari Ringa Hangarau Iraruke | the New Zealand Medical Radiation Technologists Board (MRTB), with whom they set up a jointly owned company - Te Rangatapu Pūtaiao a Rongōā | the Medical Sciences Secretariat.

Sharing secretariat resources enables both authorities to jointly manage key initiatives and subsequent annual business goals. Consequently, the individual strategic planning documents for the Council and the MRTB share several similarities and common goals. The Secretariat staff manage key business requirements and provide advice for the Board and the Council.

---

## Te Ama Tōtika

### Māori practitioners' hui 2025 – open for registration

In our last newsletter we mentioned that Te Ama Tōtika and the Council were planning to host a hui for Māori practitioners in central Auckland during February 2025. It's not only on but an invite to register went out to Māori practitioners on Wednesday, 11 December.

The date for **this hui is Wednesday, 26 February 2025 – 9:30am to 3:30pm**. It will be held at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, **Auckland**. This activity will count as continuing professional development.

A key topic for discussion will be about **establishing a community of practice** and **how to attract more Māori into the professions**.

#### How to register

We'll provide more information about the hui early in the new year. In the meantime, view details about it [here](#) – including **how to register**. This information is on our website under 'News / Hui for Māori practitioners'.

**Registration closes 5pm on Friday, 7 February 2025.**

---

### Expressions of interest

The Council will soon be seeking expressions of interest to join Te Ama Tōtika in 2025. We're looking for two members (a pre-analytical technician and an anaesthetic technician). Please have a think about whether this is something that would interest you, or someone you know.

Te Ama Tōtika is made up of eight people who represent all the different scopes of practice (as well as lay people). Their role is to review key standards and codes of conduct and provide advice to the Council. For your information: there are specific requirements under section 118i to set standards of clinical competence and cultural competence (including competencies that will allow effective and respectful interaction with Māori).

For more about Te Ama Tōtika and its current members, view information on the website here – it's under 'about us' and the 'Māori Practitioners Advisory Committee'.

## Mike awarded King's Service Order

Mike Hollings is a Senior Consultant at Haemata (Māori professional services consultancy). He's also consultant to the MSS Board of Directors on all things te reo and te ao Māori, along with the Secretariat staff.

Recently Mike was awarded the King's Service Order (KSO) – an acknowledgement for his services to education and Māori.

Mike has spent 35 years in education, 17 as the head of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu correspondence school, CE of Te Māngai Pāho (the government agency responsible for promoting Māori language and culture on radio and TV, along with many other achievements. He says, 'When I was in university, I got very much involved with the Te Reo Māori Society. And then latterly, working with people to establish kura kaupapa Māori and kōhanga reo in the Wairarapa. Those things have been really quite enduring things that I'm probably the most proud of.'



You can read the full Te Ao Māori News article about it [here](#)  
Tohu a Te Kīngi 2024: Mike Hollings' passion for education and te reo Māori – Te Ao Māori News.

Congratulations Mike, and how lucky are we to have you supporting and advising us.

## Proposed fee changes

The Council's income comes mainly from fees associated with the issuing of practising certificates (that registered practitioners apply for each year).

## Proposal

Based on the current volume of practitioners, and other factors, and to ensure there's sufficient funds to operate effectively, we projected the Council would need to increase practitioner fees for the 2025/2026 practising year.

## Thank you

You will have seen information about this already, inviting you to take part in the consultation: the proposed increase of anaesthetic technician/medical laboratory science practitioner and applicant fees for the 2025/2026 practising year – submissions closed Monday, 2 December.

Thank you to those people who were able to provide feedback. The Council is now considering that feedback and we'll let you know what the outcome is shortly.

## Expert advice sought - MLS SOP

We're about to review the Medical Laboratory Science scopes of practice. This will also include the competence standards to ensure information is aligned.

In October this year we invited registered medical laboratory science practitioners to register expressions of interest in becoming part of an expert advisory group (EAG) for providing advice to the Council about this. The response was outstanding – with over 70 applications received.

The members have now been advised, with representation from all three scopes of practice. The expert advice this EAG provides will ensure the gazetted scope reflects modern practice and ensures the safety of the public.

You can view information about the MLS SOP review [here](#) – it's on our website under 'News – Expressions of interest: Medical laboratory science scopes of practice review'.

## Why not? Become a med lab scientist!

Anna Wiles is currently working at the Medical Sciences Secretariat as the Medical Sciences Council Education Advisor.

Thoughts provided by Anna Wiles - her journey - stepping into a stimulating and progressive environment.

Did you ever wonder what you were going to do with your life? Yes! Did you ever think about becoming a Medical Laboratory Scientist? What's that, never heard of it?

Well, maybe not until the COVID-19 pandemic, when some of 'what we do in the shadows' got a spot in the limelight.



The 'team of 5 million' witnessed an army of medical laboratory scientists going to work each day, processing an unrelenting tsunami of COVID tests, on top of all the other critical testing of patient samples they do on an average day.

**What do medical lab scientists do?** As health professionals and career scientists running diagnostic labs, they prepare and carry out a range of tests using specialised and sophisticated equipment on blood, body fluids and tissue samples obtained from patients. They then examine, analyse, interpret and provide results to physicians, other health professionals and pathologists who then make the decisions on treatment and therapy.

**How do you become one?** First you need to graduate with a 4-year BMLSc degree. The next step is to register with the Medical Sciences Council and then apply for a practising certificate, then find a job, which I did.

**What do people in these professions do?** Typically they may work in two (or more) of the following disciplines:

- Clinical pathology doing:

Haematology  
Clinical biochemistry  
Transfusion science  
Blood bank  
Medical microbiology (bacterial, fungal, parasites)  
Clinical immunology (immune system) and virology (viruses)

- Molecular pathology doing:  
Molecular diagnostics  
Genetic diagnostics
- Anatomical pathology doing:  
Histology  
Cytology.

**What got you interested in the profession and how did you become one of them?** It happened for me completely by chance. My first exposure was incidental. Armed with a BSc (last century) I got a job working in the Clinical Biochemistry Department at Christchurch Hospital for a Research Scientist, who in those days were an integral part of the clinical labs. My work bench was behind the posh new 'SMAC' analyser, so I got to know the dedicated, close-knit hardworking fun-loving staff, and what their work was about.

Fast forward a few years and I was then working in the Histology Lab in the Oral Pathology/Biology Department at the Dental School. After two years of practical experience there, together with theory training (through Anatomic Pathology at Dunedin Hospital) I sat the Histology exam, then got registration as a medical laboratory technologist. It wasn't a straight road but an interesting one. Then I got an offer to train in Cytology at Dunedin Public Hospital, so I literally walked across the road and did that.

After 12 years I stepped across the road again, this time to the Dunedin School of Medicine at Otago University to work in Molecular Pathology and Molecular Translational Research. That's where I attained a PgDipMLSc and a PhD and began teaching in the Medical Laboratory Science Professional programme.

**What did you enjoy about working as a Medical Lab Scientist?** Everything! It's a fascinating and tangible world under the microscope lens, very colourful, as tissue components and cells are differentially stained and allows the study of tissue architecture (Histology/Histopathology - tissues from biopsy and surgery) and the study of cells (Cytopathology) in disease processes and in cancer.

*cont.,*

Cytologists are trained to detect subtle changes to accurately distinguish precancerous, malignant, and infectious conditions and usually work closely with a pathologist. In a small team of three in Cytology, we covered all aspects, from data entry to manual specimen preparation, staining, microscopy screening of slides, identification, analysis and preliminary diagnoses. We attended Fine Needle Aspiration (FNAs) all over the hospital, outpatients, inpatients, oncology, theatre, CT, ultrasound, breast screening, and provided a rapid PAP stain - a quick look under the microscope to assess if the specimen was adequate and representative.

We had lots of interaction with nurses, radiologists, sonographers, clinicians, surgeons and oncologists, and a lot of patient contact. Many of the patients I worked with had a cancer diagnosis, and I became part of their health journey from a diagnostic perspective - more importantly from a wider holistic perspective. I felt privileged to work there.

**What changes have you seen?** I've seen a vastly increased health and safety aspect since I first started in the profession, and consideration of workers health. Also, the increased quality control, along with automation and proprietary kits replacing manual tasks (and in some cases people). The most significant changes being the rapidly advancing molecular diagnostics from translational evidence-based research, and continuously evolving technological innovations and powerful tools that did not exist a few decades ago. Coupled with the information age, internet access and a wealth of knowledge on hand, today's new qualifying scientists have benefited from a very inclusive approach - team learning and the collaborative process - along with hands-on lab experience and learning manual methods. Many core tests and processes remain the same, as does the goal to meet patients' needs and achieve better outcomes, improved health and wellbeing.

Scientists are stepping into a stimulating and progressive environment. They're equipped to keep up with what's new, encouraged by the continuing advancements in technology and research that are used in the labs.

Career development, career satisfaction and career progression are essential components of this post millennial age, Gen X, Y, Z and alpha, and their expectations in this space need to be considered going forward, as their skills and knowledge are vital. Well, that's my five-cents worth anyway.

## *Change is coming and it's exciting*



### **From a regulation advisor**

Here at the Medical Sciences Secretariat (MSS), the regulation team are always busy processing applications for registration and APCs, answering questions and processing other registration-related requests.

Doing this means using a piece of digital equipment called a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. While our current CRM system has served us well for nearly 20 years, it's time to replace it with a modern system that fits current and future needs. We've named this work Project VELMA and set up a fantastic project team to get the job done.

The team are currently tackling the enormous task of guiding our contracted experts to customise a new system (VELMA). Our aim, once the system is built, tested and embedded, is to make the switch in April 2025.

### **What this means for you**

A key part of this project centres around process improvement, the goal being increased accuracy and efficiency. Once the new system goes LIVE, we expect there'll be a more comprehensive online profile for practitioners, through which you'll be able to make requests and applications, provide feedback, manage your supervision/supervisees, complete the Continued Professional Development (CPD) audit, and more.

### **Business as usual**

Until then, it's 'business as usual'. There won't be any major changes to our processes for the next APC renewal (recertification/applying for your Annual Practising Certificate).

### As a reminder

You must hold a current APC to practise as a medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioner in Aotearoa New Zealand. Information on how to apply for your APC, and when, is available here – on our website under 'Already registered'. There's also a list of FAQs at the bottom of the web page.

### Keeping informed

We'll provide updates about the replacement CRM system, and what it means for users, by email – as we reach key milestones throughout the project. This will include contact details, should you have any queries.

---

### Reviewing the exam - survey

We're reviewing the exam, the exam process, and holding a survey with past participants to find out what they thought about it (their experience).

By 'exam' we mean the online examination that is sometimes offered to international practitioners wanting to register, to practise in Aotearoa New Zealand. You can view information about the exam [here](#) – it's on our website under 'Pre-registration / Internationally qualified - How to register / Online examination'.

While the exams have been providing the Council with satisfactory results and assurance of an applicant's foundational knowledge, reviewing them is part of our scheduled review and quality improvement processes.

We've started investigating the current exam process, people involved, procedures, policies, timing, and guidance. This review will highlight areas where we can provide greater clarity, effectiveness, and efficiencies.

Recently we sent a survey to past successful practitioners, and employers of those practitioners. Once the survey has ended we'll analyse the responses, and use that information to provide insight into the validity of the exam in reflecting good current practice of candidates assessed in the relevant scope of practice.

### What this means for you

It's not going to affect you at all (unless you're one of the people that we surveyed – and thank you for taking part, by the way) – this article is just for your information.

### Visitors from the Malaysian MOH

In October the Secretariat staff hosted two visitors from the Malaysian Ministry of Health (Alia and Kamisah). It was an opportunity to exchange information, and for our visitors to not only find out what we do, but how we do it (for the Board and the Council\*).

Deputy Registrar Peter Lourie said, 'Alia and Kamisah spent one and a half days with us – talking about registration, examinations, international qualifications and recertification. They were impressed with the amount of work we do, our knowledge and the variety of things we deal with. It was very easy to talk with them as they were so engaged and thirsty for knowledge.'

*Image (front/left to right): Alia and Kamisah from the Malaysian Ministry of Health. (back/left to right): Dr Sue Calvert, CE and Peter Lourie, Deputy Registrar, from the Medical Sciences Secretariat.*



*\*see information at the end of this newsletter*

---

### Health and disability services rights

#### A reminder to...

View information about services rights on the Health & Disability Commissioner (HDC) website [here](#).

There are online learning modules - relevant for all practitioners - information for providers of health or disability services and consumers, including a video that encourages you to be aware of your rights.

[Online learning – Health & Disability Commissioner](#)



## APCs and bulk funding

Every year registered practitioners apply for their Annual Practising Certificate (mostly this occurs during March), and every year they, or their employer (if agreed) pays the fee). Last year we introduced the option for employers to pay for multiple employees using the bulk funding arrangement.

This option will still be available in March 2025, but not after that as our systems are no longer able to support it. Also, this process takes a considerable amount of time – it's a lot of manual handling.

For more about bulk funding you can view information [here](#) – it's also available on our website under 'Already registered / Annual Practising Certificates – APC fees paid using bulk funding'. It's important that you talk with your employer and confirm that they have an arrangement with the Council before using this option.

---

*\*The Medical Sciences Council (MSC/the Council) works very closely with another health responsible authority, Te Poari Ringa Hangarau Iraruke | the New Zealand Medical Radiation Technologists Board (MRTB/the Board). Together they set up a jointly owned company, Te Rangatapu Pūtaiao a Rongoā | the Medical Sciences Secretariat (MSS/the Secretariat) to achieve efficiencies and consistency in regulatory standards, manage key initiatives and business goals.*

---

If you have any feedback or questions - about the newsletter and/or anything else - please contact us by emailing

[msc@medsci.co.nz](mailto:msc@medsci.co.nz)

or phone us on

**+64 4 801 6250**

## Office closed over the holidays

During the December/January holidays our MSS office will be:

**closed 4pm, Friday 20 December 2024**

**reopening 8am, Monday 6 January 2025.**

If you have any queries during that time, please check the website in the first instance:

[www.msccouncil.org.nz](http://www.msccouncil.org.nz)

You can also email [msc@medsci.co.nz](mailto:msc@medsci.co.nz) – this will be monitored during the holiday period for urgent enquiries.

Ngā mihi mō ngā tau kei  
mua i te aroaro.

Good luck for the future  
everyone.