

Specialise in the Mind

A snapshot introduction to
psychiatry subspecialties



The Royal
Australian &
New Zealand
College of
Psychiatrists



Psychiatry subspecialties

Psychiatry is a diverse discipline. Every client is unique and no two people have the same story or psychiatric presentation. There are many different symptoms and causes of mental ill health and a wide variety of treatments available.

A range of subspecialties address the needs of patients throughout all the stages of life, from childhood and adolescence into adulthood and old age.

Additional subspecialties address issues such as addictions, or a psychiatrist may work with other health professionals as part of a team dealing with complex issues such as self harm or eating disorders.

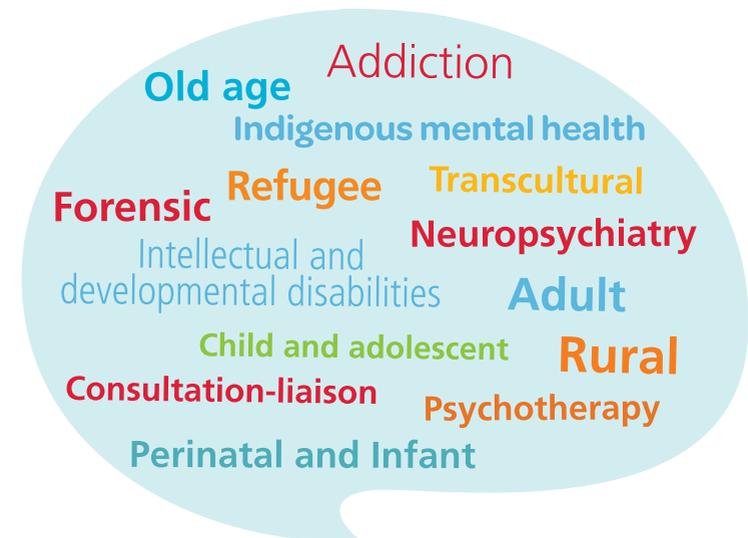
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About the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists in Australia and New Zealand. For more information go to www.ranzcp.org.

This information reproduced from the RANZCP website www.ranzcp.org/students





Addiction psychiatry

An addiction psychiatrist's work focuses on the study, treatment and prevention of a wide range of addictions.

The aim is to limit the addictive behaviour of a person, address their vulnerabilities for addiction and then provide help in maintaining their recovery.

Addiction psychiatry requires a good knowledge of both physical health and psychological treatment, as well as an understanding of the social context and public health approaches to these problems.

Psychiatrists in this area play a vital part in the development of community policies and programs to combat and manage alcohol, drug and gambling problems.

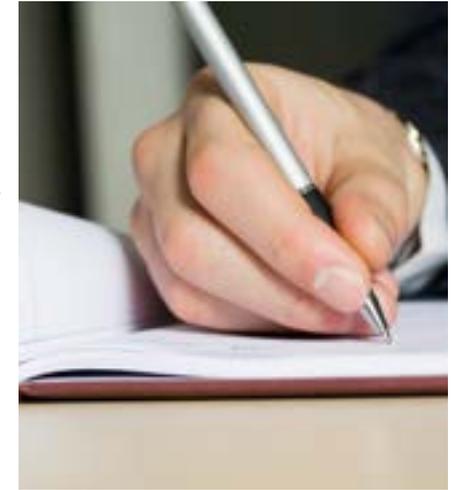
Forensic psychiatry

Forensic psychiatry covers the areas where criminal and civil law meet psychiatric practice.

Forensic psychiatrists help courts determine criminal responsibility. They are responsible for the assessment and treatment of mentally disordered offenders both in custody and in the community. They also assess issues such as the risks of violence and reoffending.

Aspects of forensic psychiatry include:

- involuntary treatment
- juvenile offending
- competence
- psychiatric injury and disability
- diversion of offenders from court to treatment
- the provision of medico-legal opinions and expert evidence.



Child and adolescent psychiatry focuses on infants, children, adolescents and their families. Typically a psychiatrist dealing with children will see developmental disorders such as ADHD, autism or emotional and behavioural issues that have resulted from conflict or abuse.

Often the issues that can lead to mental illness in adulthood first become noticeable in adolescence. A psychiatrist working with teenagers might encounter the first episodes of conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, anorexia nervosa or schizophrenia.

Psychiatrists working with children and adolescents draw on a wide range of skills, including psychopharmacology, psychotherapy and family therapy. They often work alongside professionals such as teachers, school guidance officers, child safety workers, psychologists and paediatricians.

Child and adolescent psychiatry

Neuropsychiatry

Neuropsychiatry sits at the nexus of psychiatry, neurology and medicine, and is dedicated to understanding brain-behaviour relationships and caring for sufferers of neuropsychiatric illness. The specialty is frequently referred to as 'organic' psychiatry and addresses the issues of mental health disorders and biological brain disease.

Neuropsychiatrists see patients with a wide range of disorders of behaviour, emotion or cognition associated with organic brain disease, particularly neurological or neurodegenerative disorders.

Patients with issues such as younger-onset dementias, movement disorders such as Huntington's and Parkinson's diseases, and treatment-resistant psychiatric illnesses may be among those typically seen by a neuropsychiatrist.



Consultation– liaison psychiatry

Consultation–liaison psychiatrists work with patients, medical colleagues and also systems outside mental health. They deal with the coexistence of a range of physical and psychological issues.

They provide patients with holistic health care and can provide valuable training and advice for hospital colleagues managing common mental health problems that they encounter in their day-to-day practice, such as depression, dementia, delirium or anxiety.

Medical and surgical patients have higher rates of mental health problems than the general population, which can be helped with psychological or pharmacological treatments.

Patients coping with chronic diseases can also benefit from a consultation–liaison psychiatrist’s help if they are having difficulties managing their condition.



Adult psychiatry

Adult psychiatrists are at the cutting edge of mental health services where patients and their families are most distressed and at risk. They frequently encounter conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, personality disorders and a range of anxiety disorders.

In the community, adult psychiatrists are the leaders of multidisciplinary health teams, formulating and determining management plans for patients and their families. They work with members of the team to deliver treatment to the patient, including education, lifestyle advice, medication, and social, occupational and psychological therapies. Adult psychiatrists may also work in a range of other roles, including other subspecialties.

For many, adult psychiatry is considered the heart of the discipline; it is the most popular and commonly practiced subspecialty and provides an interesting and rewarding career.

Old age psychiatry

The psychiatry of old age relates to the patterns, causes, effects and relationships between the ageing process, medical factors, and the social, psychological, spiritual, and cultural issues of late life.

Psychiatrists in this area collaborate with a variety of colleagues and agencies such as nurses, physicians, social services, occupational therapists and volunteer organisations.

As their populations age, Australia and New Zealand are experiencing an increasing demand for psychiatrists who are well equipped to help older people and their families deal with the effects of mental health problems in later life.



Psychiatric psychotherapy

Psychotherapy explores the connections between meaning and motivation that underpin our feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Psychotherapists combine biological, psychological and social perspectives, while also considering factors such as physical conditions, the advice of medical colleagues and risk.

Some therapies are structured, logical and take a problem-solving approach, while others use a more intuitive exploratory method. A psychotherapist may work with individuals or with couples, families, groups, therapeutic communities or organisations.



Perinatal and infant psychiatry

The most common perinatal mental health problem is postnatal depression. Postnatal depression can have severe long-term effects on relationships, families and children.

Partners can experience depression and the parental bonds with the infant can be affected, leading to a child having issues later on.

Perinatal mental health is closely connected to infant mental health, so the relationship between mother and baby is critical. Working with mothers and infants to improve their interaction and attachment at an early stage of development can also help to prevent children developing mental health problems later on.



Psychiatry of intellectual and developmental disabilities

Almost 500,000 Australians suffer from some form of intellectual disability. People with intellectual disabilities have highly complex needs and suffer from higher rates of mental ill health, poor general health and shorter life expectancy.

Psychiatrists working within the field of intellectual disability deal with a wide range of issues. There are increased biological risk factors, such as genetic abnormalities or organic brain damage, as well as increased psychological and social risk factors that predispose people with intellectual disabilities to psychiatric disorders.

Psychiatrists working with people with intellectual disabilities liaise with family members, carers and a wide range of additional support services to provide a secure or safe environment for people who are often vulnerable in general treatment settings.

Contacts

For more information on becoming a psychiatrist, please contact the training manager in your state or territory.

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The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists has received Australian Government funding under the Specialist Training Program to develop this resource.

Flexible workdays

It is important to me to have a life as well as a career and psychiatry lets you do that*



Spend time with patients

Psychiatry is extremely rewarding... it is enormously satisfying to observe the positive impact you make on people's lives*



Holistic medicine

The interface of brain and mind is a fascinating area

Effective and evidence-based treatments

We are at the frontier of medical research



Change your scene

Be sought after all over Australia and New Zealand

Variety of workplaces



Many psychiatrists split up the working week between 2-3 different settings

Specialise in the Mind

Be in demand

Approximately 45% of Australians¹ and New Zealanders² may experience a mental health condition in their lifetime



A range of subspecialties

- Addiction
- Old age
- Indigenous mental health
- Forensic
- Refugee
- Transcultural
- Neuropsychiatry
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Adult
- Child and adolescent
- Consultation-liaison
- Perinatal and Infant
- Rural
- Psychotherapy

Think laterally



You have the scope to use your own individual skills instead of a set treatment formula*

It is multidisciplinary

We work with a team of health professionals



1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2. New Zealanders' University of Otago, National Mental Health Survey

For some great opportunities, apply to become a Psychiatry Interest Forum member www.ranzcp.org/pif

