

# Medical labour force related to cardiovascular conditions

## Introduction

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare conducts a survey on the medical labour force in Australia. The scope of the survey is to gather information on all medical practitioners registered with the Medical Board in each State and Territory who are eligible to practise.

Each State and Territory Medical Board conducts an annual renewal of practitioner registration and, except for Western Australia, the survey questionnaire is sent to all medical practitioners as part of the registration process. In Western Australia, the first survey conducted by the Medical Board was in conjunction with the renewal of registration in 1996. Estimates based on the 1996 survey have been included to provide national aggregates (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1997b).

## Uses of medical labour force data for monitoring medical care of cardiovascular conditions

The Medical Labour Force Survey can be used to estimate the numbers of practitioners registered and working in the specialties of cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery and vascular surgery. However, it should be noted that not all procedures carried out by cardiothoracic, vascular and neurosurgeons would be for cardiovascular diseases or related conditions.

Data on Medicare practitioners from the Department of Health and Family Services provides some information on the number of Medicare registered practitioners, and the number of services carried out in and out of hospital. It must again be noted that not all procedures carried out by the specialists listed would have been for cardiovascular conditions. Estimates of practitioner numbers from the Medical Labour Force Survey may differ from estimates from Medicare data, as Medicare statistics for specialists include non-specialists whose main income from Medicare is in a specialist field.

## Number of medical practitioners and Medicare services in cardiovascular and related specialties

In 1995 there were an estimated 471 cardiologists, 84 cardiothoracic surgeons, 106 neurosurgeons and 122 vascular surgeons registered and practising in these fields as their main specialty. In addition there were an estimated 71 general practitioners mainly practising in cardiology (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1997b).

Medicare data, which does not cover services to public patients in public hospitals or outpatient services by public hospitals, indicate that 473 cardiologists provided 1,700,000 services in 1994-95, representing an average of 949 in hospital services and 2,646 out of

hospital services per cardiologist. An estimated 90 cardiothoracic surgeons provided 63,000 services, representing an average of 408 in hospital and 289 out of hospital services per practitioner. An estimated 119 practitioners performed 198,000 vascular procedures, representing 404 in hospital and 1,258 out of hospital procedures per practitioner (Table 59) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 1996c).

**Table 59: Cardiovascular condition related Medicare providers and services, 1994–95**

Specialty	Number of practitioners	Services ('000s)	Average number of services per practitioner	
			In hospital	Out of hospital
Cardiology	473	1,700	949	2,646
Cardiothoracic surgery	90	63	408	289
Neurosurgery	94	93	305	684
Vascular surgery	119	198	404	1,258

Source: Department of Health and Family Services, unpublished data.