



The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of
Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

TOPIC 00
INTRODUCTION
TO THE PRACTICE OF
OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY

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UPDATE LOG

If you have worked through a previous version of this FLP unit, please take note of the following changes:

8 June 2005

Link updated relating to 'Establishing a Practice'.

INTRODUCTION TO OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY

Of all the medical specialities obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) offers the greatest range of potential interests. It offers not only the chance to practice one of the few arts of medicine (manipulative obstetrics) but the surgical skills of operative gynaecology (including minimally invasive surgery), the practice of internal medicine, endocrinology, neonatal paediatrics, oncology and medical imaging to mention the major areas involved in the day to day practice of an obstetrician and gynaecologist.

It is the only specialty that can offer you the chance of looking after 3 or maybe 4 generations at the same time as you can care for the foetus, the mother and the grandmother and possibly the great grand mother. It also has the possibility of really looking after a woman from womb to tomb as a neo-nate (or even at the time of conception, i.e. IVF), child, adolescent then pre and post menopausal adult.

One of the real buzzes of obstetrics is to deliver the child(ren) of a woman that you brought into the world.

Training in obstetrics and gynaecology and the maintenance of standards of practice is the *raison d'être* for the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). The College has four classes of membership which are the Diplomate, Member, Associate Member and Fellow.

The decision to enter the field of O&G is often determined by your experiences as either a student or as a PGY1 or PGY2. In deciding whether you wish to do O&G full time, you may want to "try before you buy" by doing the Diploma of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (DRANZCOG) which is a qualification for general practitioners (GPs) who may wish to do either shared care or intrapartum care in conjunction with another obstetrician (either specialist or procedural GP).

LEVELS OF PRACTICE

There are three levels at which one can pursue a career involving obstetrics and gynaecology:

1. General practitioner obstetrics and office gynaecology

GP trainees or practicing GPs who wish to gain the DRANZCOG should make contact either with the RANZCOG or the Joint Consultative Committee in Obstetrics (JCCO), which is located at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in South Melbourne, to enquire about the rules and regulations.

There are two Diplomas for GPs which are the DRANZCOG and the DRANZCOG Advanced, the latter having been developed for GPs who wish to practice in rural and remote areas with little or no immediate back up by a specialist.

E-mail for enquiries:

- a. JCCO pam.garrard@racgp.org.au
- b. RANZCOG jtaylor@ranzcog.edu.au

2. Specialist obstetrics and gynaecology

Training in specialist obstetrics and gynaecology is a 6 year course that is comprised of an Integrated Training Program (ITP) of four years duration and involving a six month rotation to a provincial training post, together with two years of prospectively approved elective training in an area related to O&G, e.g. PhD, subspecialty training, advanced training in O&G to mention a few.

The rules and regulations regarding this training are available on the college web site. In particular, you may wish to read through the RANZCOG Curriculum <http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/Open/publications/RANZCOG%20Curriculum%202004.pdf> and the Training Program Handbook <http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/Open/Training/documents/Training-Handbook-2003.pdf>

Assessment of trainee specialists is a continuing process with 3 monthly interim formative assessments and 6 monthly formal summative assessments. A log book is kept for all the procedures and clinical experience that you have and this, together with the assessments, is reviewed on a regular basis by your training supervisor and also by the Training and Accreditation committee of the Regional Committee of the RANZCOG

At this point in time there is a review of the whole process of summative assessment and reference should be made to the college web site <http://www.ranzcog.edu.au>. If you become a trainee then you can become a registered user of the site and so can keep abreast of the changes that occur in the training program.

3. Sub Specialist Obstetrics/Gynaecology

The college recognises 5 subspecialties in the specialty of obstetrics and gynaecology and awards the appropriate certificate at the end of training and assessment:

- Reproductive endocrinology and infertility (CREI)
- Gynaecological oncology (CGO)
- Ultrasound (COGU)
- Urogynaecology (CU)
- Maternal and fetal Medicine (CMFM)

With the introduction of the new curriculum, subspecialty training can begin in the 6th year of training as part of the elective years. The requirements for training will vary between the subspecialties. Further details are on the college web site: <http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/Open/Training/SubSpec/subspec-main.htm>

OBSTETRIC AND GYNAECOLOGICAL PRACTICE

There are many different ways of practicing O&G.

1. According to your form of employment

- Academic
- Staff specialist; full /part time in a public hospital
- Private & public; a good mix for many specialists particularly provincial practice
- Private practice only

2. According to your particular interest

- Obstetrics and Gynaecology +/- a special interest e.g. U/S, IVF
- Obstetrics only
- Gynaecology only
- Subspecialty practice
- Special interest practice e.g. Menopause, Adolescent O&G, Family planning, Sexual health, Endoscopic surgery, Pelvic floor surgery etc
- General practice obstetrics ; shared care / intrapartum care (with/without specialist backup)
- General practice office gynaecology

3. According to your location

- Inner city
- Metropolitan
- Outer metropolitan
- Provincial specialist
- Rural /Remote GP

4. According to your type of practice

- Solo
- Associateship
- Partnership
- Group practice (multidisciplinary)

5. According to the hours one wants to work

- Full time
- Sessions
- Part time
- Job share

All these options have their pros and cons and it is for the individual to find the best option for oneself and, of course, the best option may change according to a whole host of factors, some of which you have control of and some of which are beyond your control, e.g. you may opt to practice in a provincial centre while the children are young and at primary school and then move to a capital city for their education or the cost of medical defence becomes so great that you decide to become full time staff specialist.

ESTABLISHING A PRACTICE

Having finished your training you now move into the big wide world of specialist obstetrics and gynaecology and out of your comfort zone as a hospital employee as a trainee.

There are lots of things that need to be done before you can set yourself up in any practice and they involve some statutory bodies, e.g. in Australia, the Health Insurance Commission (HIC) for Provider Numbers to use for billing and referrals, Prescriber Numbers for writing prescriptions, Location Specific Provider Numbers (LSPN) for the use of ultrasound as well as Prescription and Authority forms to mention a few. The various Medical Boards need to be contacted if you are going to practice in more than one state. You need to contact your Medical Defence Organisation (MDO) to change your status and ensure that you have the appropriate cover. You now need to look at outfitting your rooms that you may or may not lease, buy outright etc. Outfitting can be done by buying outright, leasing or buying on hire purchase. It is important to get advice from your accountant and ensure that he/she is comfortable with medical practices. Running a medical practice is a bit different from owning your own plumbing business, as every consultation will involve a Medicare cheque and so Big Brother knows what you are doing.

The RANZCOG together with the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG) has developed a document regarding the setting up of a practice:

<http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/publications/inpractice.shtml> (Note: this is a large file and may take some time to download depending on your connection speed)

LOOKING/TRYING BEFORE YOU BUY

Launching into a career in O&G is a bit of a daunting task unless you are totally committed or have experienced the buzz and have made up your mind. There are several ways of trying before you buy and one of those is to do the DRANZCOG which will expose you to the thrills of obstetrics but also let you see what a commitment there is, and it is important to be aware of the impact that it will have on your life as an individual and also on family life.

A second way is to peruse the current literature regarding O&G. A few references would include:

a) British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Vol 110 number 10, Oct 2003, Supplement 21, which gives an interesting historical slant to the practice of O&G

b) http://www.who.int/health_topics/obstetrics/en/ that gives you a practical basis for obstetrics

c) Web sites of associated organizations eg.

- Fertility Society of Australia (FSA) - <http://www.fsa.au.com/>
- Australian Menopause Society (AMS,) - <http://www.menopause.org.au/>
- Australian Society of Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology (ASCCP) - <http://www.asccp.com.au/>
- Australian Gynaecological Endoscopic society (AGES) - <http://www.ages.com.au/>
- ASUM (Australian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine) - <http://www.asum.com.au/open/home.htm>

d) Introductory texts to O&G may include undergraduate type books such as:

- Beisher and Mackay
- Kovacs and O'Connor, *Obstetrics, Gynaecology, and Women's Health*, Cambridge University Press, 2003
- Setchell and Thilaganathan, *Ten Teachers Self-Assessment in Gynaecology and Obstetrics* (see RCOG Bookshop web site <http://www.rcog.org.uk/bookshop/bookshop.asp?PageID=16&BookTypeID=&ShopperID=1872979998&BookDetailsID=11>)

e) The book shop at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists <http://www.rcog.org.uk/bookshop/bookshop.asp?SectionID=6>

Obstetrics and Gynaecology offers virtually a complete spectrum of medicine, including:

- Embryology, (teratogenesis and congenital malformations),

- Anatomy of the pelvis and abdomen,
- Physiology of the whole person and specifically that of the neuro-endocrine system, genitourinary system, lactation and pregnancy,
- Biochemistry of the endocrine system and the reproductive system
- Pathology of the female reproductive system, some disorders of the male reproductive system and also of the embryo/foetus/neonate,
- Surgery of the female pelvis,
- Internal medicine which includes all the medical problems that affect women and so can affect the pregnant woman,
- Pharmacology that looks at the effect of drugs on the foetus, the new-born and the breast fed baby,
- Medical imaging that includes ultrasound,
- Genetics, which is a developing area that will become more and more important and,
- Neonatal paediatrics, which is important in the resuscitation of the newborn and care of the neonate.

To top it all off, obstetrics usually involves couples who are fit and healthy and are happy to be pregnant, and if they are not, they present a real challenge to the carer. Gynaecology is a bit of a mixed bag: those who are having periods and don't want to, those who are having periods and aren't happy with them, those who aren't having periods and aren't happy and those who have something else wrong with their "parts."

Obstetrics and gynaecology offers you the chance to choose a branch of medicine that offers you a bit of everything.