

MEDIA RELEASE



**The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Obstetricians
and Gynaecologists**

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Excellence in Women's Health

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Obstetrics in Victoria increasingly women's business

One third of obstetrician / gynaecologists (O&Gs) practising in Victoria are female, and an even higher percentage of women are in training to become obstetricians and gynaecologists.

This is one of the findings of survey of the rural and urban Victorian medical obstetric workforce by Dr Bruce Warton and Dr Cameron Loy – *Obstetric Workforce Survey in Victoria – Rural and Urban* – presented to the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) in Hobart today.

Drs Warton and Loy also found that women are “significantly overrepresented” in the specialty of obstetrics and gynaecology compared with other medical specialties.

The survey was of specialist obstetrician / gynaecologists, i.e. Fellows of the RANZCOG, and general practitioners who hold a Diploma in obstetrics from the RANZCOG across Victoria with high response rates, of 78 per cent and 75 per cent respectively, obtained.

Younger, female GPs were more likely to be candidates of the Diploma of the RANZCOG, and more likely to work in urban areas. Conversely, the full-time rural obstetric GP workforce is largely male and older.

While the number of obstetrician / gynaecologists graduating each year remains stable, the rural and regional specialist O&G workforce has declined and is overwhelmingly male.

Half of GPs with the Diploma of the RANZCOG who had previously managed labour in the past have ceased to do so, while 25 per cent of Victorian obstetrician / gynaecologists do not practice obstetrics.

“Obstetric practice is a system: issues that arise in one area of practice, such as rising indemnity costs and fear of litigation, impact on wider practice issues, and the decision of individuals to stay in obstetric practice or not reflect this system model,” said Dr Bruce Warton, an obstetrician / gynaecologist in Hamilton, Victoria.

Unrealistic patient expectations were identified by both specialists and GPs as an area to be addressed in the context of medical indemnity issues.

The wider implications of the “feminisation” of the O&G profession are not yet fully known. Increasing numbers of women in the obstetric workforce likely indicate a drop in the total number of workforce hours, since women are more likely to work part-time and to take time out from practice, and – as this survey shows – are more likely to work in urban areas leaving rural obstetrics to men.

Dr Cameron Loy, from the Greater Green Triangle Department of Rural Health, is a GP, and holds a Diploma from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG).

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