



## **A Career in Radiation Therapy**

### **What is Radiation Therapy?**

Radiation Therapy is a critical aspect of Radiation Oncology. Radiation Therapy is the treatment and management of cancer by radiation. The modality plays a major role in the treatment of cancer patients by offering a cure in many cases and relief of symptoms in others. Radiation Therapy may be used alone or with other treatment modalities like surgery and chemotherapy (drug therapy). The ionising radiation used in the treatment of cancer is x-rays, gamma rays and electron beams.

### **What does a Radiation Therapist do?**

A Radiation Therapist is a key member of the professional team that manages the cancer patient's treatment. In conjunction with the Radiation Oncologists they are responsible for the design, accurate calculation and delivery of a prescribed radiation dose over a course of treatment to the patient. The Radiation Therapist utilises sophisticated imaging equipment and advanced computer systems to create a treatment plan to deliver the optimum dose to the tumour, specific to a particular patient and their diagnosis whilst minimising the dose delivered to healthy tissue. The Radiation Therapist will deliver the planned treatment with the same accuracy and precision using highly sophisticated computer-controlled equipment.

As well as having scientific and technological interests Radiation Therapists need to have compassion and strong interpersonal skills. Their role extends to counselling of patients regarding their fears and anxieties often related to their diagnosis and treatment. Radiation Therapists work as members of a highly skilled multi-disciplinary team.

The Radiation Therapist is able to work in a highly advanced technical profession that requires excellent people skills. It is an exciting and rewarding profession and great opportunities await the graduate.

As an Australian graduate there are good travel opportunities to work overseas. Australian graduates are sought after in many countries.

Further information about the role of a Radiation Therapist and what the profession does can be found on the web sites of the Universities which undertake the courses for these professionals.

### **Is it safe as a profession?**

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about radiation. Through their studies the Radiation Therapist learns how to minimise the radiation dose to themselves, the patient and the public. Occupational exposure of radiation professionals is closely monitored with the use of specialised devices both personal and throughout the workplace.



## **How do I become a Radiation Therapist?**

This discipline comes under the broader category of Medical Radiation Sciences. The course undertaken is either an undergraduate course or a Graduate Entry Masters course. Courses in Medical Radiation Sciences are accredited by the regulatory authority the Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia (MRPBA) and potential students are advised to check with the University that the course has MRPBA accreditation. At the completion of some academic courses the graduate will need to undertake one year of mentored clinical entry into the profession and workforce, the Supervised Practice Programme (SPP). This is a paid year of structured supervised practice and the graduate must complete the year to be eligible to be granted full registration with the MRPBA. The SPP year must be undertaken in Australia in an approved hospital, radiation oncology department or private radiation oncology clinic.

## **How much will I earn as a Radiation Therapist?**

Salaries vary from State to State as Health is a State concern and not a Federal jurisdiction. As a guide, graduates working full time in the SPP should expect to earn from \$36,000 to \$50,000.

Within this discipline there are chances to specialise and opportunity to earn higher salaries through promotion along technical, management and education career paths. Further details regarding earnings are available from individual departments and practices.

## **Where can I work?**

Radiation Oncology departments are found in major public hospitals, some private hospitals or private oncology clinics. Most departments are found in capital cities or larger regional and rural locations.

Radiation Therapists may wish to become involved in academic positions. These posts may involve teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate courses or dedicated research activities.

In Radiation Therapy there are opportunities to specialise in management, administration and education or in specific areas of expertise such as brachytherapy, stereotactic radiotherapy and advanced treatment modalities.

For further information look at our website: [www.asmirt.org](http://www.asmirt.org)

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