



## **NEW ZEALAND RESIDENT DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **NZRDA supports Senior Doctors' call for safe staffing levels**

The New Zealand Resident Doctors' Association (NZRDA) supports the call by the Senior Doctors Union (ASMS) for safe staffing levels for senior doctors. The ASMS is urging the Health Minister for an accord on the issue to address serious staff shortages and prevent burnout.

"Resident Doctors work alongside SMOs (Senior Medical Officers) in our hospitals every day," says Dr Deborah Powell, National Secretary of the NZRDA. "Behind every RMO is an SMO available to support, supervise and teach us," she says, "but unfortunately resident doctors are increasingly aware of just how fragile many of their SMOs are becoming. The demands of excessive patient workloads need to be addressed urgently."

Resident Doctors have first-hand experience of SMO burnout and its effects on SMO wellbeing. "The SMO is ultimately responsible for patient care," says Dr Powell. "Whilst resident doctors are on duty 24/7, there is always an SMO available to supervise their care of a patient. The SMOs workload directly impacts on the level of support they are able to provide."

NZRDA believes too few SMOs are being employed for the increasing level of patient care required. "We believe the DHBs make decisions about SMO staffing levels largely driven by cost considerations," says Dr Powell. "However, there is also a human element that must take priority. The wellbeing of SMOs is of serious concern to resident doctors, not just because they rely on their supervision, support and training, but also because today's resident doctors are tomorrow's SMOs. From a wellbeing perspective, the future is looking pretty bleak," says Dr Powell.

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**Resident Doctors and Senior Medical Officers**

Resident Doctors are also known as RMOs or Resident Medical Officers. The term SMO (Senior Medical Officer) is the equivalent term for Senior Doctors or consultants working in NZ's public health system. Resident doctors are registered medical practitioners ranging from new graduates fresh out of medical school through to vocationally registered GPs and SMOs. They can be a resident doctor for up to 13 years, during which time they continue with postgraduate training in specialist fields such as GP, paediatrics, surgery, pathology, and so on. Once they complete this additional training they become GPs or SMOs.