



New Zealand and Australia Society of Renal Dialysis Practice Incorporated

Position statement for the standardised use of the title 'Physiologist'

Currently, across Australia and New Zealand there is a disparity between the consistency of title among Renal Physiologists working in the same profession. There is no standardised title for individuals working in the Renal Profession and this has contributed to inconsistent workplace acknowledgement and recognition of skills, qualifications and abilities.

The professional title across Australia tends to be 'Technician' and 'Technologist'. These terms are historical and antiquated in describing the actual knowledge, training, education, responsibilities and abilities; as such a new standardised title is needed to reflect the training, responsibilities and skills of those practicing in the modern era. The standard title currently used by the same profession in New Zealand is 'Physiologist' with all New Zealand and Australian members working under the same scope of practice, education, training and competency standards under the NZASRD.

The aim of this recommendation is to standardise the professional naming convention for the Renal Physiology Profession across New Zealand and Australia, and to align with similar Clinical Physiologist Professions. A standardised title recommendation is part of NZASRD's broader aim to secure acknowledgement of, and professional respect for, the appropriate high standards in healthcare provision which exist within this Profession, encompassing national and trans-Tasman recognition of qualifications, skills and abilities.

The current job title and variation between the countries has contributed to:

- Inconsistent workplace acknowledgement and recognition of skills, qualifications and abilities
- Lack of professional identity; without being grouped under a standardised title, individuals do not always have a sense of belonging to their professional community, this has contributed to lack of representation in the governance of health care policy for the profession
- Lack of perceived identity/recognition; those outside the industry commonly do not really know who a Renal Physiologist, Technician or Technologist is, nor what their role within healthcare entails

- The clinical workforce is sometimes confused with their technical machine service colleagues as they often share the same title of ‘Technician’
- Poorly defined pathways for career entry and training, including difficulties in transferability of professional skills from one workplace to another
- Lack of recognition as a recognised and regulated profession by government authorities
- Role creep and encroachment from other professions on duties traditionally falling within the Renal Physiologists’ clinical specialisations and scope of practice

‘Renal Physiologist’ is the recommended title to be used for all clinical renal healthcare professionals, as it better represents the appropriate standard of education and training that is required to achieve professional competency to practice as well as highlight the scope, breadth and depth of the role in the modern era. As well as this, modern entry pathways into the profession now require the same entry level qualifications as all other Allied Health Professions and as such should be appropriately recognised once in the workforce.

In New Zealand, the title of ‘Physiologist’ is already widely used, aligning with the Clinical Physiologists Registration Board (CPRB) scopes of practice in renal, cardiac, sleep, respiratory, neurology and exercise. The CPRB upholds competency standards to ensure a high standard of practice of Clinical Physiologists working in New Zealand, while consistently promoting the development and enhancement of Physiology roles in the New Zealand healthcare system.

In Australia, the term ‘Physiologist’ is being proposed as the base title for the Australian Council of Clinical Physiology (ACCP) which is the new organisation acting as a registration body for the wider Clinical Physiology Professions and includes Cardiac, Sleep, Respiratory and Neurophysiology. Like Renal, all of these professions currently have a similar need for representation and the ACCP will be able to advance the broader Clinical Physiology Profession to this end through appropriate discipline lead registration and regulatory requirements. Similar to the CPRB in New Zealand and RCCP in the United Kingdom, the role of the ACCP will extend to credentialing Clinical Physiologists, accrediting undergraduate University courses and post graduate certifications. The NZASRDP has expressed interest and intends to align with the ACCP, with the goal of applying to join these Physiology Professions in the near future.

Recommendations:

- The title ‘Renal Physiologist’ be used by all clinical Renal Professionals throughout New Zealand and Australia
- All Physiologists adopt the new designation as part of their post-nominal title when making formal communications in the course of their professional work
- National, State and Territory health agencies and Unions begin the review of position descriptions and associated certified agreements and industrial awards to more accurately match Renal Physiologists to their qualification, clinical responsibility and skill base

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