WORK ROLES OF RESPIRATORY SCIENTISTS IN AUSTRALIA.

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Work roles of respiratory scientists in Australia need to be defined to inform revision of current recommendations for qualifications of laboratory personnel and registration of respiratory scientists.

Methods: A questionnaire investigating work roles was mailed via the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science (ANZSRS) to 194 Australian members in 2004.**Results:** A total of 81 (42%) returned the completed questionnaire with one quarter received from each of NSW, QLD and Vic and the remaining quarter from SA, WA, Tas and ACT. The mean age of respondents was 40.6 years (11.7 SD) with 58% female. 84% (68) had Bachelor of Science degree with 28% of these also having a higher degree. The mean number of years as a respiratory scientist was 13 years (8.7 SD) with 70% working full-time. The table presents respondents estimates of hours per week spent in various activities.

	Patient Interaction	Admin and planning	Liaison medical staff	Training	Liaison nurses	Professional Committee
N	81	80	79	76	77	70
Mean	18.3	8.4	2.3	1.8	1.3	1.0
SD	11.6	8.5	2.6	2.5	2.0	1.4

Respiratory scientist respondents interact with a range of other health professionals: respiratory physicians (96%), respiratory scientists (83%), ward nurses (83%), asthma educators (62%), physiotherapists (58%), pharmacists (47%), emergency department staff (39%) and off site general practitioners (43%) and practice nurses (22%). 75.3% (61) were aware that a registration system was currently being developed for respiratory scientists.84% (68) though ANZSRS was the appropriate body to register respiratory scientists.

Conclusion: Guidelines recommending qualifications for respiratory scientists need to recognise the high number of existing practitioners with Bachelors and higher degree qualifications. The breadth of activities undertaken by respiratory scientists should be reflected in assessing competencies for registration.