

Dermatology



A dermatologist is the medical expert you should consult if you have any significant problem with your skin. Dermatology is the science that is concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the skin, hair and nails.

Dermatology involves but is not limited to study, research, and diagnosis of normal and disorders, diseases, cancers, cosmetic and ageing conditions of the skin, fat, hair, nails and oral and genital membranes, and the management of these by different investigations and therapies, including but not limited to dermatohistopathology, topical and systemic medications, dermatologic surgery and dermatologic cosmetic surgery, immunotherapy, phototherapy, laser therapy, radiotherapy and photodynamic therapy.

How many people get skin disease?

The skin is the largest and most visible organ of the body. It reflects the health of the body and acts as a barrier against injury and bacteria. Unfortunately, at one time or another, nearly everyone has some type of skin disease - infants, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly. One in six (15%) of all visits to the family doctor (GP) involves a skin problem.

What are the most common skin diseases?

- Common skin diseases include
- Skin cancer
- Warts
- Fungal infections
- Dermatitis
- Psoriasis - a skin disorder which affects 100,000 New Zealanders.
- Acne affects every teenager to one degree or another.
- Hand dermatitis, resulting from external contact with detergents and household chemicals, affects most women with young families.
- One in six of all children develop atopic eczema
- One in five persons suffers from cold sores (herpes simplex).

Sun protection

Sun protection is essential to reduce the burden of skin cancer and other signs of photo damage.

How are Dermatologists trained?

Dermatologists are medical doctors. In New Zealand, after completing six years of medical school the dermatologist-to-be must complete a general medical training programme which usually takes 3 to 4 years. After a rigorous examination (FRACP) he or she is then eligible to enter advanced training.

The advanced training in dermatology involves at least a further four years of intensive study, research and practice in a variety of approved training centres in New Zealand and overseas. The position is usually that of a registrar or training fellow who is closely supervised by experienced dermatologists.

In total, a dermatologist has a minimum of 13 years of training.

How many dermatologists are there?

In New Zealand in 2014, there are about 60 practising dermatologists, of whom most are members of the NZDS, the New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated, the organisation which oversees professional standards and continuing medical education. Members of the Society are Vocationally Registered as Dermatologists by the Medical Council of New Zealand.

Is there on going training?

Continuing professional development (CPD) helps to keep dermatologists up to date and is a requirement for registration by the Medical Council of New Zealand. DermNet New Zealand oversees an online CPD certification programme. This is accomplished through annual clinical audit, peer review, practice visits, publications, teaching, reading journals, and attendance at courses, symposia, lectures and seminars organised by Dermatological Societies worldwide.

What do dermatologists do?

Trained dermatologists usually combine several activities – seeing patients in public hospital clinics and/or in private practices, acting as consultants to other specialists, teaching, and delving into clinical or basic research.

Dermatologists must have expertise in basic sciences including microbiology, pathology, biochemistry, physics, physiology, and endocrinology. They must be familiar with all the other medical specialities because of their consultant work and because skin diseases are often associated with internal conditions.

Dermatologists perform skin surgery in many situations:

- To prevent or provide early control of disease, eg remove skin cancer.
- To improve the skin's appearance by removing growths, discolourations, or damage caused by ageing, sunlight or disease.
- To establish a definite diagnosis (biopsy).

How is the work of dermatologists changing?

Dermatology is constantly adapting itself to meet the changing medical challenges of our society. New drugs may cause unusual side-effects; pesticides, industrial compounds and cosmetics continually pose new dermatological problems. More leisure time and outdoor work has increased the exposure to the sun and other hazards which can cause skin disease.

Reference:

<http://dermnetnz.org/dermatologist.html>