



The Medical Laboratory Scientists Workforce The Start of a Change Movement?

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Dear Colleagues

Over the next few months you will receive a series of newsletters for scientists about the future; what it will probably look like, and how do we need to adapt to ensure relevance and job security amongst a number of things. We may not know exactly what the future holds, but we have a good idea of the trends and possibilities.

We understand that you are all busy and that the pressure of every day work is almost overwhelming; scant time or probably energy left to think about this type of stuff. But putting some thought and activity into this is something we must do if scientists are to continue to be suited to the future expertise required.

As examples of the profound changes already upon us:

- A new Maldi-Tof installed at PathLab BoP saw half the micro staff lose their jobs almost overnight.
- Changes to cytology screening will mean that we need less than half of the currently employed cytologists in NZ. The future work of a cytologist will also change as less normal screening and more pathology become the norm.

But change also means new opportunities:

- ✓ Our ability to better use lab data to inform the system on both a population and individual patient basis.
- ✓ The need for laboratory “navigators” or “communicators” to assist patients and clinicians make best use of the array of tests and their outcomes.
- ✓ The role for scientists in the (wide) field of genomics; new test development etc.
- ✓ The emerging need for scientists to manage laboratory services in the widest sense (including the laboratory team and community and client clinical liaison)

But we also need a few things to fall into place.

- ❖ We need improved postgraduate education to enable upskilling as required in these fields, and of course the time and financial support to make this happen.
- ❖ We also need laboratories to commit to the expansion of services into these value adding areas of practice and deliver on the career paths needed to implement change. Your managers will need to change with the times at least as much as you do.

The future will not happen as we might best want without some work and drive. We have considerable consensus so far: the National Laboratory Roundtable has identified the need for change as has the Sciences Council and HWNZ. But this won't be enough to get the system to actually make change happen; that is where a collective drive comes in, a movement for change if you like.

As we come back from the holiday season, we ask that you put your minds to what is to follow, become engaged with us, gather your thoughts and feedback within your own areas; start having some conversations. What opportunities can you see where you work? How can we help nudge the system into responding? We'll be in touch again soon.....