

Media statement

10 November 2016

Doctors the most trusted profession: Board research

Doctors are the most trusted profession in Australia, along with nurses and pharmacists, according to social research published today into community and doctors' views about trust, confidence and fitness to practise in the medical profession.

The Medical Board of Australia commissioned the independent social research, as part of its work on [revalidation](#) which aims to help make sure that doctors are competent and keep up to date throughout their working lives. The Board has ruled out UK-style revalidation and made it clear that doctors will not be required to re-sit their fellowship exams every five years.

The Board is now engaging with the profession and the community about options for revalidation in Australia, based on recommendations made in an interim report from the Board's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on revalidation.

The social research was designed to help the Board understand what the public expects doctors to do to demonstrate ongoing fitness and competence, and what medical practitioners believe they need to do to maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills.

'It's fantastic to know that patients trust their doctors and there is no doubt that the vast majority of doctors work really hard to be good at what they do,' said Medical Board of Australia Chair, Dr Joanna Flynn AM.

'It's up to the medical profession as a whole, and the Medical Board as the regulator, to ensure this trust is well founded,' Dr Flynn said.

The research analysed feedback from 3,000 doctors and 1,000 members of the community. It found there are some gaps between what doctors now do, and what the community expects. Key findings include:

- 90% of community trust doctors and nurses, 85% trust pharmacists and 7% trust politicians
- doctors and the community agree that the most important attributes for building confidence and trust with patients are effective communication and doctors explaining their diagnosis and treatment
- 39% of doctors and 72% of the public think doctors' practice should be reviewed at least every five years and
- 40% of doctors and 5% of the public think doctors should only be reviewed if there are concerns about their practice.

Most doctors say they are doing a range of continuing professional development (CPD) activities, but less than half reported being involved in clinical audit or peer review. Almost all are confident they are maintaining their professional competence.

Sixty two per cent of doctors thought that all doctors should be reviewed from time to time, and 20% disagreed.

According to the report, Australians are unaware of how doctors are currently reviewed but think it is important that they are reviewed at least from time to time.

More than half the doctors surveyed support demonstrating their capacity to provide high quality medical care as a requirement of their annual registration renewal.

‘The research gives us some great information about what doctors are doing now to keep their skills and knowledge up to date, and about what doctors and the community think they should be doing,’ Dr Flynn said.

The consultation on revalidation closes at the end of November 2016 and the EAG on revalidation will make its final report to the Board in mid-2017. The Board will review the findings of the social research and consider the advice of the EAG in its final report.

‘The Board will then set a direction and propose what is needed so that doctors in Australia remain competent throughout their working lives,’ Dr Flynn said.

More information and resources:

- read the [social research report](#)
- learn more about [revalidation and join the consultation](#)
- read more about the work of the Board [on our website](#).

Media inquiries:

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