



Review Resource Document 15 (2011)

## **WELFARE OF ANAESTHETISTS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**

### **TRAINING AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The work of an anaesthetist is rewarding, but it is also both exacting and unpredictable.

Because of this, family care and domestic arrangements must be completely reliable, and flexible enough to cope with last minute problems.

#### **LIFE BALANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Maintain a balance between work and leisure activities at all times, even during examination preparation (see Resource Documents (RDs): RD 01 Personal Health Strategies and RD 06 Training and Examinations).

Work hard at your primary relationship. In the long term it is more important than the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists' (ANZCA) or other examinations!

Discussing the exact role expected of each partner in the lead up to examinations is useful. You should not just assume that your partner will fulfil the role of chef, housecleaner, shopper, childminder, etc, while you study.

Constant re-evaluation of how the relationship is coping with the stress is needed.

Relationship counselling should be prioritised if deemed by either partner as necessary.

Some couples assign one year to the professional priorities of one partner, the next year to the other partner.

#### **CHILDREN**

Decisions as to the timing of adding children to the family are complex. Part time (flexible) training is available for all years of ANZCA training, but significantly lengthens the time taken to complete training.

Part time appointments are sometimes hard to arrange with departments and employers, although perhaps less so if you can find someone with whom to job-share

Explore your entitlements for maternity/paternity leave. Take time off following the birth of your children. This is an exciting time, not to be missed!

#### **Breastfeeding/Expressing**

Many women find it difficult to continue breastfeeding once they return to work, however it is not impossible. Hospitals should provide an appropriate location. This should be clean and private, with



appropriate seating, a power point, appropriate rubbish disposal facilities, and a refrigerator to store milk. The hospital should allow trainees appropriate breaks to facilitate expressing.

#### Young Children

Having young children is demanding and exhausting for both partners. The joys of this phase include 3 hourly breastfeeding, sleepless nights, hormonal imbalances, and lots of crying (by baby and parents). Studying for examinations is hard enough without these added demands.

Children attending childcare or school do pick up viruses, which are lovingly passed to the parents.

Teenagers pose a different set of problems and may need just as much attention as younger children

### **HEALTH**

In the public healthcare systems, sick leave and family leave are available. Don't feel pressured to work if you are sick, or if you have to care for a sick family member.

### **DOMESTIC HELP**

Domestic help is almost essential and must have high budgetary priority. Home helpers must be prepared to take on the full range of childcare and other tasks.

Day care outside the home needs equally careful planning if it is to be flexible enough to accommodate the demands of an anaesthetic career.

Use any and all available help that is offered to you.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

It is often hard to see beyond the study years. Planning for career directions in 5 - 10 years is a very necessary exercise. By then many couples will both be in full time work.

What should the nature and balance of that work be, to give due weight to family activities and personal development?

Talk widely to friends, colleagues, and mentors who have been through these phases already. They may have great advice.

### **Further Reading**

Welfare of Anaesthetists Special Interest Group Resource Documents  
RD 01 Personal Health and Strategies  
RD 06 Training and Examinations



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ANZCA HOUSE 630 ST KILDA ROAD MELBOURNE VIC 3004  
Telephone: (03) 9510 6299 Facsimile: (03) 9510 6786