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Te Whare Tohu o Te Hau Whakaora

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ANZCA pilots new perioperative medicine diploma at New Zealand hospitals

Two of New Zealand's largest hospitals are pilot sites for a new Diploma of Perioperative Medicine, led by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA).

The qualification allows specialist doctors such as anaesthetists, surgeons, physicians, intensivists and general practitioners to further their skills and knowledge in perioperative medicine.

Perioperative medicine focuses on coordinated care before, during and after surgery from a team of healthcare professionals working together to improve patient experience and recovery, reduce postoperative issues, decrease time spent in hospital and minimise readmissions.

Nine hospitals across Australia and New Zealand are pilot sites for the new diploma, including Auckland City Hospital and Christchurch Hospital.

The diploma is made up of six units of study, delivered in a hybrid model of online learning, workshops and clinical experience. The clinical component is a point of difference which makes the ANZCA diploma unique among other perioperative medicine qualifications.

Additional hospitals will be recruited to host the diploma when it is rolled out in full from February next year.

Auckland-based Dr Vanessa Beavis, Immediate ANZCA Past President and Perioperative Medicine Steering Committee Co-Chair, says having an operation under anaesthesia is extremely safe but collectively, complications after surgery present the greatest risk to patients.

"New Zealand and Australia are two of the safest places in the world to have an operation under anaesthesia. The chances of dying due to complications during surgery are extremely low, but complications after surgery are collectively the third-leading cause of death in the developed world.

"The older and sicker you are, the more chance there is of things going wrong. The perioperative care approach ensures you're ready for surgery in the first place, and have the best chance of a good recovery after your operation."

Collaboration is key to perioperative care, Dr Beavis says.

"The Diploma of Perioperative Medicine aims to teach already qualified specialists to improve results for patients by taking an integrated, planned and personalised approach from the start of the surgery pathway, until recovery.

"Collaboration is critical. Healthcare professionals already work together at different points along a patient's journey to ensure the best possible outcome, no one specialty group can do it alone, and we can do this better.

"Importantly, the patient is central to this process, and shares the decision-making about their care."

Perioperative medicine is being celebrated as part of this year's National Anaesthesia Day, being held on Monday 16 October.

The day is promoted by ANZCA and marks the first time ether anaesthetic was demonstrated in Boston, Massachusetts, almost 180 years ago.

This year's theme is 'Anaesthetists – caring for our sickest patients before, during and after surgery'.

Hospitals and private anaesthesia practices will be marking the occasion by displaying posters and other information on perioperative medicine.

Dr Beavis says National Anaesthesia Day is a great opportunity to celebrate the importance and impact of anaesthesia.

"It's one of the greatest discoveries of modern medicine and many of today's operations, especially for the very young, very old or very ill, would not be possible without it."

ANZCA is one of Australia and New Zealand's largest specialist medical colleges, and the region's foremost authority on anaesthesia, pain medicine, and perioperative medicine.

The college is responsible for the training, examination and specialist accreditation of anaesthetists and pain medicine specialists and for the standards of clinical practice in Australia and New Zealand.

For more information or to request interviews, please contact ANZCA Senior Communications Advisor – New Zealand, Reon Suddaby, on +64 21 228 8072 or rsuddaby@anzca.org.nz Follow us on X @ANZCA #NAD23