

More than 1 million genetic and genomics related tests are performed in Australia each year and demand is increasing.

‘Genomics is set to be an increasingly important tool for health care and offers much potential, but like the broader health workforce more generally, the Australian genomics workforce is under increased pressure,’ says Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association Acting CEO Kylie Woolcock.

Released this week by the Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research, a Perspectives Brief [Transforming the genomics workforce to sustain high value care](#) explores some of the challenges currently facing this rapidly evolving sector.

‘A coordinated national genomics workforce strategy will ensure we have a workforce that is resilient and sustainable to support all Australians to benefit from genomics.

‘As the application of genomics testing increases, the workforce will need to be reinforced to support increased demand for services.’

Broadly made up of genetic professionals such as clinical geneticists and genetic counsellors, and non-genetic professionals including GPs and allied health professions, the genomics workforce provides services relating to testing, analysis of results and consultations with patients. Implications of genomic testing can be wide reaching, not only affecting a single patient but entire families.

‘This is a rapidly evolving field. Training and education needs to keep pace to sufficiently prepare the workforce for new technologies coming down the pipeline and to develop the hands-on skills needed to use them. To date, opportunities for students to train and complete workplace rotations have been limited. These should be expanded to match increasing requests for genetic services.

‘Shifting to a multidisciplinary team’s approach, while not new, will be critical for meeting the requirements of genomic testing and should be supported. During testing and analysis, many different health professionals are consulted as no one discipline has all the necessary knowledge individually. Multidisciplinary teams draw together skill sets and bridge the knowledge gap between genetic and non-genetic specialities.’

A sustainable workforce must also sit within a system that supports equitable access. Individuals seeking genetic testing, and who do not meet specific criteria, are often faced with additional out of pocket costs leaving clinicians to navigate complex funding models to cover costs of testing and genetic counselling.

‘By focusing on strengthening the genomics workforce, utilisation of multidisciplinary teams and reviewing funding models for testing and associated costs, growth in the sector can be supported as demands for services continue to rise.’

The Perspectives Brief [Transforming the genomics workforce to sustain high value care](#) and online version of this [media release](#) may be found on the [AHHA website](#).

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit healthcare.

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