

THE NSW MEDICAL RETRIEVAL SERVICE

The NSW Medical Retrieval Service (NSWMRS) is the medical arm of NRMA CareFlight. The NSWMRS consists of senior medical specialists in Anaesthesia, Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine. All specialists work part time in retrieval and must be clinically active in their chosen specialty. CareFlight also employs registrars who are suitably qualified and experienced to perform retrieval, on a full time basis.

The Service is recognised for training by:

- The Australasian College of Emergency Medicine – recognised for six months' advanced training for fourth and final year registrars
- The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthesia – recognised for six months' training for third, fourth and final year registrars
- Joint Faculty of Intensive Care – recognised for three months' training with consideration of six months' upon request

CareFlight is uniquely Australia's only emergency helicopter service to hold university affiliation, through an agreement signed by Charles Sturt University, to jointly promote teaching and pre-hospital medical research.

Retrieval training generally hones the resuscitation skills of the registrars rather than introducing them to the concepts. Thus basic science knowledge to the level of the relevant primary exam is assumed and teaching concentrates on the clinical application of this in the venue of retrieval medicine. All doctors should be EMST or ATLS trained.

CareFlight registrar positions are recognised in their own right for six months' core training in either Anaesthesia or Emergency Medicine and six months non-core Intensive Care training. There are eleven registrar positions available from fourth year to senior registrar.

CareFlight doctors provide retrieval services to the Ambulance Service of NSW (ASNSW) at Bankstown and Orange bases. In this role, retrievals (inter-facility missions) and primary (at scene missions) are undertaken using helicopters, fixed wing and road vehicles. The retrieval doctor must be familiar with all these modes of transport and how they impact upon the care of their patients.

The centrepiece of the current CareFlight research program is the Head Injury Retrieval Trial (HIRT), a randomised controlled trial which dispatches a rapid response helicopter staffed by a CareFlight doctor and an ASNSW paramedic to patients with potentially serious head injuries. This operation receives funding from our major sponsor NRMA Insurance, the Motor Accidents Authority and business and private supporters in the community. Registrars are rostered to HIRT as the primary care giver, with a senior CareFlight specialist.



The CareFlight Hirt Team treats a patient with head injuries in the Blue Mountains

Paediatric inter-hospital retrieval involvement by CareFlight staff is occasional only, as neonatal and paediatric services are normally provided by *NETS* (Newborn and paediatric Emergency Transport Service) from the New Children's Hospital, Westmead, using the *Child Flight* helicopter. However the CareFlight HIRT team frequently attends injured children on a non-randomised basis.

CareFlight International Air Ambulance, in partnership with the jet operator Pel-Air, provides a medical evacuation service throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This provides support for the health system in New Caledonia, for Australian Government and Defence missions and for travellers. We currently staff jets based in Sydney, Darwin and Perth. Services are also provided within Australia, most frequently on the Darwin to Adelaide route. Longer haul missions are also conducted on regular passenger aircraft.



CareFlight International Air Ambulance retrieves a critically ill environmental scientist from the remote Pacific Island of Aitutaki

Education is a vital part of the CareFlight goal of promoting excellence in pre-hospital and retrieval medicine. This can be seen in the registrar induction training, the ongoing education program with a strong emphasis on practical scenarios and simulation and the Pre-Hospital Trauma Course which is open to external applicants. A Diploma University course through James Cook University is now taking applicants.