

Professionals in Cardiac Sciences Australia

Position Statement:

Recommendation to standardise the title for Australian
Clinical Cardiac Science Professionals to:

“Cardiac Physiologist”

(updated August 2020)

Introduction:

In 2016 Professionals in Cardiac Sciences Australia (PiCSA) took action to address the large inconsistency in the titles used for Cardiac Physiologists working in the same profession across the various States and Territories of Australia.

The history of title disparity was noted to have contributed to vastly differing awards/certified agreements and pay scales, as well as inconsistent workplace acknowledgement and recognition of skills, qualifications and abilities.

PiCSA consulted with its membership and put forward the recommendation of “Cardiac Physiologist” as a standardised national title. This recommendation was issued to the relevant governing Health Authorities and Unions.

The aim of this recommendation is to be better recognised as a distinct and legitimate professional group, and thus be better positioned to secure appropriate accreditation, recognition of qualifications, skills and abilities, as well as parity in remuneration and industrial conditions on a national basis.

Why is a standardised title needed?

Despite PiCSA’s 2016 recommendation, there is still some residual inconsistency in the title used for individuals working in clinical Cardiac Science positions in Australia. This title variability is

demonstrated by the use of terms such as “technician”, “technologist” “scientist” and “specialist” for individuals performing variations of the same roles in different States/Territories.

The terms “technician” and “technologist” in particular are no longer appropriate, as they do not reflect the training, responsibilities and skills of those practicing in the modern era.

Job title variation has contributed to:

- Vastly **differing awards/certified agreements and pay scales**, as well as inconsistent workplace acknowledgement and recognition of skills, qualifications and abilities.
- **Lack of professional-identity:** without being grouped under a standardised title, individuals do not always have a sense of belonging to their professional community. This has contributed to lack of representation in governance and health care policy for the profession.
- **Lack of recognition:** those outside the industry commonly do not really know what a Cardiac Physiologist is, nor what their role within healthcare entails.
- **Poorly defined pathways for career entry and training,**

including difficulties in transferability of professional skills from one workplace to another.

- **Lack of effective governance** as a recognised and regulated profession by government authorities.
- **Difficulties in obtaining indemnity insurance** (with the exception of those working in echocardiography).
- **Role creep** and encroachment from other professions on duties that fall within the Cardiac Physiologists' clinical scope of practice.

The standardised title recommendation is part of PICSA's broader aim to secure acknowledgement of, and professional respect for, the appropriate high standards in healthcare provision which exist within this Profession, encompassing national recognition of qualifications, skills and abilities as well as parity in remuneration and conditions.

Who does the standardised title apply to?

Like the titles "Nurse" and "Doctor", the term "Cardiac Physiologist" is applicable to a range of distinct specialties within the profession. There are 5 distinct cardiac science modalities for whom the title "Cardiac Physiologist" is recommended.

These modalities include:

1. **ECG** (12 lead ECG, Exercise stress tests, Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, Holter monitoring, Signal averaged ECG, Tilt table testing etc.)

2. **Cath Lab** - Cardiac Catheterisation haemodynamic monitoring, calculations, and resuscitation support
3. **Echo** – Echocardiography/Cardiac Sonography
4. **Cardiac Devices** - Cardiac Implantable Electronic Device support (implant and follow-up)
5. **EP** - Electrophysiology

The title recommendation applies to both industry employed and directly employed professionals.

Why was "Cardiac Physiologist" chosen as the recommended title?

- The title "**Cardiac Physiologist**" is already used in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. As part of the wider need for professional identity and recognition in Australia, title parity with already established international counterparts will assist in developing the profession here in Australia.
- The term "**Cardiac Physiologist**" better represents the appropriate standard of education and training that is required to achieve professional competency to practice. It also reflects the scope, breadth and depth of the role in the modern era, and emphasises the complexities of performing duties with technologically advanced equipment.

- Modern entry pathways into the profession now require the same entry level qualifications as all other Allied Health Professions (accredited Bachelor degree with work integrated learning experience) and as such should be **appropriately recognised** once in the work force.
- The term “**Physiologist**” helps us to align with other Clinical Physiology Professionals (Neuro, Respiratory and Sleep Physiologists) to work together to achieve greater strength and representation.

What else is being done?

Cardiac Physiologists are still a relatively new professional group, and are not covered by The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

PiCSA recently teamed up with other professional groups to establish the Australian Council for Clinical Physiologists (ACCP - <https://theaccp.org.au>). The ACCP is an accreditation body modelled after similar organisations in New Zealand and the UK (see <http://www.cprb.org.nz/> and <https://www.rccp.co.uk/> respectively). It works to establish and recognise appropriate professional standards for Clinical Physiologists working in Australia.

All current members of PiCSA (and the equivalent National Associations for the three other Clinical Science Professions) are presently eligible to be grand-parented into the ACCP as either provisional or full registrants, as a critical mass of members is vitally important in the goal of establishing and consolidating the ACCP as an effective organisation, and in working towards gaining membership to AHPRA.

Recommendations:

- The title “Cardiac Physiologist” is the recommended professional title for all clinical Cardiac Sciences Professionals throughout Australia and its Territories
- All Cardiac Physiologists adopt the new designation as part of their post-nominal title when introducing themselves, reporting test results or making other communications in the course of their professional work
- State and Territory health agencies and Unions support the title “Cardiac Physiologist” and continue the review of position descriptions and associated certified agreements and industrial awards to more accurately match Cardiac Physiologists to their qualification, clinical responsibility and skill base.

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