

compass

2023

spring

NSW Health Pathology Collections Edition

A focus on collections

Meet some of our frontline
staff caring for all of us

Learn how we're improving
our collection services for you

Find out what it takes
to be a blood collector



Health
Pathology

for all of
us

Welcome



NSW Health Pathology is Australia's largest public pathology provider, and our 1300 blood collectors make up 12 per cent of our workforce.

They work across the state, delivering exceptional care for patients at 160 hospital and community-based collection centres, as well as in nursing homes, gaols and even in patient homes.

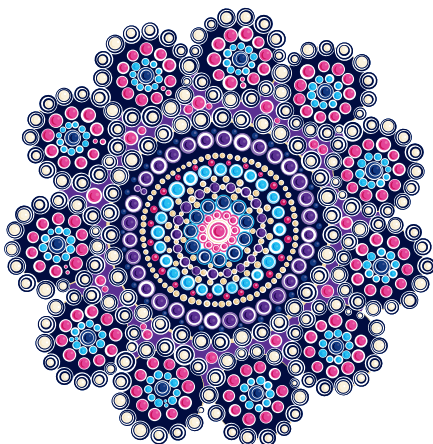
They help train junior doctors to collect blood and perform highly-specialised collections for neonate infants in some of our largest teaching hospitals. In our smaller country towns, they are quite literally the lifeblood of their communities.

It's not all blood samples, they also provide procedural tests, electrocardiograms (ECGs) and venesection therapy for patients with blood conditions.

As NSW Health Pathology's Director of Pre and Post Analytics with many years of experience across pathology I am incredibly proud of our collectors. They're the public face of our organisation and their work is the critical first step in the diagnostic testing we perform to keep patients and our NSW communities healthy and safe.

I am passionate about highlighting the extraordinary value our collectors bring to the NSW Health service. This special edition of Compass introduces you to some of our collectors and the initiatives we're working on to ensure our service meets your needs no matter where you live in NSW.

Judy Kempton-Webb
Director, Pre and Post Analytics, NSW Health Pathology



Acknowledgement of Country

NSW Health Pathology acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of New South Wales and their special place as Traditional Custodians of this land.

We would like to pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across the state.

In this special Collections edition we acknowledge our many First Nations' collectors and patients and reiterate our commitment to them in helping to close the unacceptable gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

Our value: a statewide pathology collection service – for all of us

We're undertaking a range of initiatives to further improve our service to our patients and referring doctors.



1. A Collections Collaborative

Our brains trust of managers and team leaders from across NSW meet regularly to inform and improve our services. The development of the model of care framework for collections ensures we provide consistent, dignified and person-centred care.

2. Collecting with Care training guide

Our collectors, with feedback from our patients, developed a new training resource for our 1300 plus collectors that provides practical tips and advice on delivering more personalised care.

3. Full service review

We've reviewed our services to better understand the needs of patients, carers and referring doctors. Our initial priorities are the promotion of the collector role, standardising policies and procedures, developing a training framework, mapping speciality collection services availability and evaluating the design of our collection facilities to maximise comfort.

4. Patient Experience Survey

Tell us what we're doing well and how we could improve your experience of our service. Complete our survey via the QR code in our collection centres or take a card and contact us later. You can read about some of the recent feedback we have received on the following pages.

5. Our new video

Do you have what it takes to be a collector? There are skills you will need to learn or let us know if you have some experience as a collector. A Certificate III in Pathology Collection will teach you these skills but it's how you make people feel that makes a difference to someone's experience. Watch our new video to learn what it's like to be a collector with Australia's largest public pathology service.



Want to work for us?

We advertise vacant positions on our [website](#).



Meet Lorretta, our first Statewide Collections Manager

Lorretta Thomson was a registered nurse in oncology and cardiology before making the move to pathology where she has worked as a collector, trainer and manager.

"I joined NSW Health Pathology six years ago and have held several roles, the most challenging but hugely satisfying being Nurse Unit Manager at a COVID-19 drive-through testing clinic," she said.

She describes her new role as like a support vehicle for a long-haul cycling team.

"I'm here to assist in practical ways, to keep an eye on the big picture and provide continuing assistance to our frontline, vital collectors.

"I'm working to standardise our collection practises and learning about the different needs across our vast state. Together, our collection managers are sharing valuable lessons and insights as we become a more integrated team."

Meet some of our **experienced** paediatric collectors



Monu Tualau

NSW Health Pathology
Newcastle

Qualifications

Certificate III in Pathology
Collection

Carer in the mental health
sector, 16 years

Mentors new paediatric
collectors

Monu joined NSW Health Pathology's John Hunter Hospital team 14 years ago specifically to work with babies and young children.

"I always wanted to work with babies and kids, so I moved to public pathology for more paediatric experience," she said.

"With adult patients, you can talk to them and make sure they understand what you are there to do but with kids, it takes work. The child may not understand or be able to talk, so you need to put them at ease in other ways and encourage them to relax."

Monu says paediatric collections are not always easy – but it is rewarding to know you have helped care for a child.

"I see lots of children with intellectual or physical disabilities who have different needs; I see the tiniest of bubs," she says.

"I am passionate about sharing my experience working with children, so I mentor new paediatric collectors and help them develop their skill sets."

Working with children requires a calm and patient nature.

"Not just for the children, but the parents too. I try to put myself in their shoes and think how I'd feel if it were my child. I step into that space without fuss and give quiet assurance.

"When I see kids and their parents suffering and not getting better, it's so hard to deal with that. You wish people didn't have to go through that."

As a paediatric collector in a major teaching hospital, Monu works within a large clinical team, which is another unique aspect to the role.

"Working with paediatric healthcare teams is like a big family where you know everyone, and they all know you – the nursing staff, the doctors," she says.
"We are a tight-knit multidisciplinary team."

“ The staff were beyond amazing. I took my 3-year-old daughter and was naturally a bit anxious about her having blood tests so young. However, Adrian on the desk, James who assisted with the process and the lovely lady who took the bloods were so wonderful and completely put my mind at ease. They made my daughter feel so comfortable and made it a pleasant experience for her. Can’t speak more highly of our visit. Thank you!

Parent, Royal North Shore – Private



Tanzina Sheikh

NSW Health Pathology
Randwick

Qualifications

Qualified as a nutritionist in Bangladesh before moving to Australia

Started as a collector at our Prince of Wales Hospital service in 2005

Certificate III in Pathology Collection

Teaches blood collection at a private college in her spare time

Taking blood specimens from sick young children and tiny premature babies is no mean feat. It takes specially-learned skills, lots of experience and a careful gentle manner.

One of our most experienced paediatric collectors is Tanzina Sheikh who has been with us for 17 years and works from Sydney Children’s Hospital at Randwick where kids from across NSW come for specialised care.

Paediatric collections are unique and require a different skill set to adult collections. Collectors need to empathise with the child and their parents to make everyone feel at ease.

“When an adult is sick in hospital, it’s not nice, but when their child is unwell, it’s truly awful.”

Our collectors try to only get the minimum blood needed on the first attempt.

“The hardest thing about paediatric blood collection is finding the vein,” Tanzina says. “When I first started, the senior nurses gave me some great tips and I still use their advice today.”

Some of the most challenging collections are from children with special needs. Those with autism, for example, sometimes need extra time to become comfortable with new people.

“I’m happy to take the time to make them comfortable with me, to feel relaxed. I ask them questions and learn things about them, making it easier to explain what I need from them.”

“Parents are so pleased when you can collect the blood on the first attempt.”

Caring for patients with **Hayley**



Hayley Byatt

NSW Health Pathology
Kempsey

Qualifications

Assistant in Nursing
experience and training
Certificate III in
Pathology Collection

Hayley Byatt embodies the good humour and care that can put patients at ease and make them smile.

Our Mid North Coast collector is based at Kempsey but will often work from Port Macquarie and other locations. She also performs home collections.

Her superpower is a fear of blood – her own – which means she can relate to the most reluctant of patients.

“I know what it’s like to sit in the chair. If I can help somebody get through a blood test by learning a few tricks that will help them conquer their fears, that’s me paying it forward.”

Hayley has been a blood collector for about 25 years, joining us five years ago from the private sector.

“My Kempsey team feels like a second family and we look out for each other. People appreciate what we do, especially in a rural community, where they travel considerable distances just to see you,” she says.

“The key is to treat people how you’d like to be treated. Imagine if that was your mum or sister or grandmother. Then you can’t go wrong.”

She admits some days can be taxing, but others very rewarding.

“Covid has put many things into perspective. I also see a lot of people with cancer. Every day is a struggle just to get up and be part of the world; they’re so brave. By listening, chatting and having a giggle while having a blood test, it can often make a part of their journey just that little bit easier.”

“ Hayley was kind, respectful and she was extremely competent, professional... an absolute standout. She took her time to explain the different tests that I needed, and she gave very clear instructions about further samples that I need to drop back.

Patient, Kempsey ”

“ The service was excellent, easy access, no waiting, pleasant service provider, recommending to anyone I meet who needs a blood test. ”

Patient, Mona Vale

“ Extremely quick and friendly. Staff were lovely.

Patient, Queanbeyan Hospital ”



Uncle So – The man with the golden hands



Uncle So Tran

NSW Health Pathology
Westmead, Blacktown,
Auburn and Mount Druitt

Qualifications

Registered Nurse
Certificate III in
Pathology Collection

They call him the man with the golden hands.

With more than 40 years of experience, Uncle So is one of our most experienced and much-loved pathology collectors.

His technical skills are second to none and there's nothing he's not seen or dealt with before.

Uncle So practised Buddhism and lived as a monk in pre-war Vietnam, arriving in Australia aged 19 as a refugee via Malaysia. He trained as a Registered Nurse but switched to blood collection. He enjoys meeting different people every day and being part of their care team.

"To be a good collector, you need to be confident in yourself and your abilities," he said.

"That's how you reassure patients and families they're in good hands. Plus, people think I'm funny, so I tell jokes to help relax those who might be anxious or worried."

Uncle So says one of the most satisfying parts of his role is helping to calm patients who are upset or angry.

"I believe happiness rubs off on others and I'm always in good spirits and positive. Sometimes all they need is someone to talk to and explain what's happening."

He enjoys the variety of his work at several hospitals and in different wards, collecting from adults, kids and outpatient clinics.

"Babies aren't difficult if you have good technique. I make sure I'm gentle and calm. When they see it's all over, I see the parents smile and take a big breath."



““

It's not often you find medical services that are friendly yet professional and prompt. But this is that place. My aging mother on chemotherapy has to get blood tested on biweekly basis. The nurses here make that experience least painful and inconvenient. ””

Patient, Sutherland Hospital

““

I visit weekly and always find the staff friendly, helpful and very professional. ””

Patient, Blue Mountains

““

They are the kindest pathology staff I've ever come across. I will always go back to this centre. ””

Patient, Adamstown



We're here to **help you**



We bulk bill all pathology tests covered under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and accept all test referrals from other pathology providers.



We operate more than 160 collection services in public hospitals and community settings across NSW. Visit our website location finder to find one near you.



We offer a Home Collections Service in some locations across NSW to support home-based unwell patients, and/or patients who have difficulty with mobility, including oncology and haematology patients. Speak to your specialist to find out if there is a service near you.



We provide advice on our website about a range of common tests so you're informed and aware of any special requirements.



We want to make it easy for you to share your experience of our service. You can give feedback in person at the collection service you attended or scan the QR code to open our online survey. There is also an online feedback form. There is also an online feedback form on our website.

Get involved – join our **Community Engagement Team**

“ **The voices of patients need to be heard every day in the way we work so we don't lose sight of what's important to them. We need to be partners with healthcare users so we can give them the best possible results.** ”

NSW Health's Elevating the Human Experience.

We'd love to hear from you or partner with you.

We want to work more closely with people with lived experiences to design and deliver services that meet their needs and they can easily access and use.

If you would like to contribute your unique patient experience of our services, consider becoming part of our community engagement activities.

We're particularly interested to work with patients with specific health conditions so that we might learn more to better tailor our services to meet those needs.

To find out more contact us at NSWPATH-News@health.nsw.gov.au

You can read our Customer and Community Partnership Framework on our [website](#).