



Telepathology in the Northern Territory

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The Pathology climate today is one of national and international skill shortages coupled with every increasing public and clinical expectation. The perception of Pathology as an environment of decreasing scientific skill and standards evolving through the combination of increased use of automated analytical equipment, economic constraints and increasing employment of multiskilled scientific staff is a topic discussed and hotly debated in our profession. Overcoming this perception through maintaining and promoting staff training, competency levels and professional development is a challenge for many laboratories, especially those of small to medium size.

Add to this a dispersed population over 1.3 million square kilometres, geographical isolation, climatic extremes and the highest Australian hospital workloads per weighted population with a small, and ever changing workforce, and one starts to describe the environment in which the Northern Territory Government Pathology Service (NTGPS) successfully operates.

The NTGPS sees these challenges as something to embrace and through innovation, manage and be part of the change processes required for effective and efficient service delivery now and into the future. Supervision, training and mentoring of often young, relatively inexperienced, multiskilled scientists in remote settings is being addressed through the use of different technologies including virtual microscopy and ultimately resulting in maintenance of a high diagnostic service with positive clinical outcomes.