



General Practice Network NT (GPNNT)

House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing

Inquiry into Registration Processes and Support for Overseas Trained Doctors

Submission

Terms of Reference:

- 1) Explore current administrative processes and accountability measures to determine if there are ways OTDs could better understand colleges' assessment processes, appeal mechanisms could be clarified, and the community better understand and accept registration decisions;**

Information regarding the different pathways seems to have been confused for some time and is described in different ways by different sources. This makes it very difficult on the part of an OTD to make an informed decision as to which pathway he/she is best suited to undertake.

The workplace-based assessment is taking an inordinate time to define/standardise. Delays in RACGP assessment have led to contingent strategies that further disintegrate national standardised approaches. The ACRRM Competent Authority Pathway using Work Based Assessment is fairly new but again not very well promulgated (e.g. there is no reference to it on the Doctor Connect website which uses terminology such as 'practice eligible route').

It is still unclear that if a doctor passes a Pre-Employment Structured Clinical Interview (PESCI) in one jurisdiction, it will be accepted prima facie in another. There has been one example where a doctor was not recommended for registration in the Northern Territory on the basis of a PESCI but a year or so later he passed the Victorian PESCI and sought to return to the NT. The Medical Board advised: *"Dr X's Victorian PESCI results would be considered as part of his application however the Board would need to determine whether an NT PESCI would be required. This would depend on the role Dr X is currently undertaking in Victoria, and how similar or different this role is from his proposed role in the Northern Territory."* From this example it can be inferred that there is no standardisation in the PESCI process. A number of promising recruits to the NT are being lost due to the confusion regarding PESCI and the pathways.

A clear, complete and well supported description of processes/pathways is needed to improve the understanding by International Medical Graduates (IMG). They continue to make contact with Rural Workforce Agencies and employers to make sense of what they read/hear. Also, a reassurance that PESCI is truly a national standard, i.e. scenarios, assessors, video-conferencing etc, is required.

2) Report on the support programs available through the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, professional organisations and colleges to assist OTDs to meet registration requirements, and provide suggestions for the enhancement and integration of these programs; and

The current 5 year OTD Scheme operated through the Rural Health Workforce Agency (RHWA) – funded by the Australian Government - is considered a good model in terms of providing assistance in gaining Fellowship within a specific timeframe. There are difficulties however, in that there are not always sufficient resources and funding allocated to meet the demand and to avoid any detriment to the IMG.

The role of the supervisor in this situation can also be seen in some situations as a conflict of interest as they are often vested in service provision quantity as well as quality. There may be scope in the current guidelines to alter supervision requirements along with a more supportive case management system/program.

3) Suggest ways to remove impediments and promote pathways for OTDs to achieve full Australian qualification, particularly in regional areas, without lowering the necessary standards required by colleges and regulatory bodies.

Online technology could make rural support systems more accessible. There is a need to incorporate more workplace-based assessment (given that the doctors within the pathways are already qualified doctors) including objective performance measures and possibly including client feedback.

There is also a sense of unease amongst IMGs on conditional registration, who struggle to meet their conditions i.e. Fellowship, regarding what will happen to them at the end of the Scheme. It is unclear what will happen to OTDs who have exceeded the timeframe without meeting all the criteria and conditions – this appears to be a gray area and needs clarification and ‘tightening’ up.



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