

Communiqué

Meeting of the Medical Board of Australia: 27 July 2011

The Medical Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory.

At the July meeting the Board considered a range of matters including the progress of renewals for medical registration, endorsement for acupuncture by medical practitioners and feedback to consultations.

Registration issues

Renewal of medical registration

Around 65,000 medical practitioners are due to renew their medical registration by 30 September 2011. The Board and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) recognise the importance of a smooth renewal process. There is an intensive renewal campaign in place that includes three email notices (where AHPRA has email addresses) and a number of letters reminding practitioners to renew before the due date.

The renewal form has been simplified and the disclosure questions have been changed to help streamline the process. For example, in the first year of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, registrants were asked whether there has ever been a complaint about them. Now that the information is collected, we are asking whether there have been any complaints since their last renewal.

A significant proportion of medical practitioners have already renewed online in response to the email reminders. The feedback received about the process so far has been positive. Medical practitioners who do not have access to the internet will be able to renew in hard copy. Renewal application forms will be mailed to any practitioner who has not yet renewed in response to the email reminder.

By the 2012/13 renewal, the expiry date for all medical practitioners with general and/or specialist registration will be aligned to 30 September.

While medical practitioners will be sent a number of reminders to their registered address, the responsibility to renew rests with the individual practitioner. There will be a late fee applied to medical practitioners who do not apply to renew by the due date, but who apply to renew within one calendar month of expiry. Those who do not apply to renew within one calendar month of their registration expiry date must, under the National Law, make a new application.

Endorsement for acupuncture

The National Law provides for the endorsement for acupuncture for all registered health practitioners, including medical practitioners. The current situation is that in all states except Victoria, **from 1 July 2012**, it will be an offence for a person to take or use the title "acupuncturist" if that person is not registered by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia or if their registration has not been endorsed by one of the Health Profession Boards.

In Victoria, it is **currently** an offence for a person to use the title "acupuncturist" or to hold themselves out as being registered or endorsed to practise acupuncture unless their registration is endorsed for acupuncture or they are registered by the Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria.

Endorsement for acupuncture has been available in Victoria for several years. Under the transitional provisions in the National Law, the qualifications that were previously approved for acupuncture have transitioned and continue to be the approved qualifications. Endorsement for acupuncture will be available to medical practitioners in all states and territories if they have the necessary qualifications.

The qualifications for endorsement for acupuncture are:

1. The Graduate Certificate in Medical Acupuncture (Monash University)
2. The Australian Medical Acupuncture College course (AMAC) - AMAC-QLD and AMAC-NSW combined course

Eligible practitioners (with either qualification above) are also required to successfully complete the Part 1 written and clinical examinations leading to fellowship of AMAC.

Medical practitioners with the approved qualifications will be able to apply for endorsement for acupuncture by:

- Completing the application form (will be available on www.medicalboard.gov.au in the coming weeks), including providing:
 - A certified copy of the approved acupuncture qualifications and
 - A letter from the Joint Consultative Committee for Medical Acupuncture (JCCMA) confirming the applicant's qualifications for acupuncture endorsement
- Paying an application fee of \$93.00.

Changes to who can certify documents for registration

The Board approved an amended policy for certifying documents in support of an application, or other purpose required by the National Law. The amended policy aligns with the list authorised by the Commonwealth Attorney-General. The amended policy will promote consistency between jurisdictions about who can certify documents. It aims to help registrants meet the certification requirements when they apply for registration. The list will be available on the AHPRA website shortly.

Accreditation

One of the objectives of the National Law is to facilitate the provision of high quality education and training of health practitioners. The accreditation function is the primary way of achieving this. The National Law defines the respective roles of the Board and its appointed accreditation authority, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), in the accreditation of medical schools and medical specialist colleges and in the development and approval of registration standards.

The Board received advice from the AMC on the accreditation of the University of New South Wales Faculty of Medicine.

University of New South Wales Faculty of Medicine

The Board approved the Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery qualification from the University of New South Wales for both the six year and four year streams, as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration as a medical practitioner until 31 December 2013.

Policy matters

Definition of practice

The Board will release for public consultation a paper on the definition of practice in late August. It will be joined in this consultation by six other National Boards. The consultation process will be open to the profession and the public. The Board looks forward to a great deal of feedback about this issue and values the contribution of organisations and individuals to the consultation process.

Feedback on consultations

The Board has received considerable feedback through its consultations on draft guidelines for medical practitioners and medical students infected with blood-borne viruses and on the draft guidelines on sexual boundaries. The feedback is published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

The Board will now review the feedback and revise the document on sexual boundaries to reflect this. The revised guidelines will be published after they have been approved by the Board.

The Board decided to wait before deciding whether or not it needs to progress the guidelines on medical practitioners and medical students infected with blood-borne viruses. The Communicable Disease Network Australia (CDNA) recently consulted on guidelines for health care workers with blood borne viruses. The Board decided that if the CDNA guidelines are finalised, the Board will be better placed to determine how the Board's guidelines can best interact with these. The Board may consider endorsing the CDNA guidelines and focusing the Board guidelines on how it would manage notifications about practitioners with blood-borne viruses.

The Board is grateful for the considerable thought and time that stakeholders have put into submissions. These greatly assist the Board in developing robust and useful guidelines for the medical profession.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM
Chair, Medical Board of Australia

2 August 2011