



Communiqué

Medical Board of Australia meeting: 14 December 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.

Reflections on operational performance

In his regular report to the Board, Martin Fletcher Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) reflected on AHPRA's operations over the past year. The Board noted that 2011 has seen a marked improvement in operational stability with greatly improved customer service. There has been a substantial investment in business improvement and innovation with the benefits now being realised. The Board was pleased to note that the recent major renewal period for the medical profession had proceeded smoothly. The focus for AHPRA in 2012 will include improving national consistency of processes and decision-making, improving reporting of AHPRA's performance, further strengthening the relationship between AHPRA and the Boards and continuing organisational re-design and resource allocation to further improve efficiencies and customer service.

Update on the specialists register

All medical practitioners with general and/or specialist registration should have received correspondence from AHPRA about their listing on the Specialists Register.

AHPRA is updating the Specialists Register – including a practitioners' specialty and field of specialty practice as a priority – to make sure the community has accurate and up to date information about medical specialists. Medicare Australia will in future also be relying on the Specialists Register to determine eligibility for Medicare specialist rebates. The accuracy of practitioners' listing on the Specialists Register, including their specialty, with any field/s of specialty practice, will guide Medicare Australia to determine whether patients are able to access a specialist rebate.

Medical practitioners who are vocationally registered general practitioners (VR GPs) should confirm that they are listed as specialists on the Specialists Register. If they are not listed as specialists, they must complete and return the form sent to them by AHPRA to make sure that they continue to receive the relevant rebate from Medicare Australia.

Medical practitioners with specialist and / or general registration who have received a letter from AHPRA need to open it, read it and act on it if their listing on the Specialists Register is not accurate and up to date.

The documentation that medical practitioners need to supply to AHPRA to support a change to their listing on the Specialists Register is:

- documentation from the relevant college verifying Fellowship (e.g. copy of original fellowship) or
- a copy of specialist assessment from college/s or
- evidence from Medicare Australia that before 1 July 2010, you were entitled to receive a Medicare specialist rebate or
- evidence of Vocational Registration status granted by Medicare before 1 July 2010.

A detailed briefing note on updating the Specialists Register is published on the Medical Board of Australia website at <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration/Types/Specialist-Registration.aspx>.

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.

Accreditation of medical schools and specialist colleges

The AMC is responsible for accrediting individual programs of study after it is reasonably satisfied that:

1. the program of study meets an accreditation standard or
2. substantially meets an approved accreditation standard and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time frame.

The AMC can also refuse to accredit a program of study.

The AMC must give the Board a report after it decides to accredit a program of study (with or without conditions).

After being given an accreditation report, the Board may approve, or refuse to approve, the accredited program of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration. An approval may be granted subject to conditions.

The Board approved the following accredited programs of study:

University of Notre Dame Australia, School of Medicine Sydney

The Board approved the MBBS degree from the University of Notre Dame Australia, School of Medicine Sydney, as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration in the medical profession. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2013.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists

The Board approved the education and training programs and continuing professional development program of the Australasian College of Dermatologists as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2013.

The College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand

The Board approved the accredited training programs in intensive care medicine and paediatric intensive care medicine and the continuing professional development program of the College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2015.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists

The Board approved the ophthalmology training program and continuing professional development program of the Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2016.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

The Board approved the training program and continuing professional development program of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2015.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

The Board approved the education and training program covering training in the specialties of Cardiothoracic Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Urology, and Vascular Surgery and the

continuing professional development program of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as providing a qualification for the purposes of specialist registration. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2017.

Funding of health programs for medical practitioners

The previous Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, together with the Australian Medical Association Victoria, established the Victorian Doctors Health Program (VDHP) in 2001. The VDHP is a confidential service for doctors and medical students who have health concerns such as stress, mental health problems, substance use problems, or any other health issues. It was funded by the previous Victorian Board with funds raised through medical practitioners' registration fees.

The VDHP continues to be funded from money that was committed by the previous Victorian Minister for Health from reserves of the Victorian Board, before the transition to the National Scheme. Funding has been committed until 30 June 2013.

The Board received correspondence from the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council about the VDHP and more generally, externally run but Board funded health programs for medical practitioners. The Ministerial Council has asked the Board to consider the continuation of the VDHP and its expansion nationally, or to other states, territories or regions.

The Board will develop a discussion paper on this issue and seek feedback from the profession, noting that any funding of external health programs would need to be funded through an increase in registration fees. The Board would seek the active support of the profession for any proposals.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM
Chair, Medical Board of Australia

20 December 2011