



Communiqué

Medical Board of Australia meeting: 21 March 2012

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.

National Medical Board Meeting

The Board held its second National Medical Board meeting under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in Brisbane on 1 - 3 March 2012. The majority of National and State and Territory Board members made the time to attend the meeting. In addition, senior staff from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) who are involved in medical regulation also attended. This annual meeting is an opportunity for State and Territory Board Members to contribute their experience and expertise to the National Board's policy agenda. A range of policy issues was canvassed and will inform the Board's policy agenda over the course of the next 12 months.

The meeting focused on the Board's core activities of registration and notifications management.

The meeting was enriched by two external speakers. Sir Liam Donaldson, formerly Chief Medical Officer for England and the United Kingdom's Chief Medical Advisor presented on the regulation of medical practitioners and patient safety. Dr Russell Stitz, the Queensland Health Quality and Complaints Commissioner presented on quality, governance and patient safety issues.

Establishment of the National Specialist International Medical Graduate Committee

Historically, responsibility for the assessment of specialist International Medical Graduates (IMGs) has rested largely with individual specialist colleges. In 1999, recognising the importance of uniform standards and processes, the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (representing specialist colleges), the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and state and territory medical boards, established the Joint Standing Committee on Overseas Trained Specialists (JSCOTS).

The role of JSCOTS has changed since it was first established, reflecting a range of external influences including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's authorisation case into the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 2002/3 and the Council of Australian Government's International Medical Graduate assessment initiative in 2008.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme has also changed some of the traditional roles and accountabilities of organisations involved in the assessment of specialist IMGs. This provides an opportunity to review the processes, aiming where necessary, for improved efficiencies and increased transparency.

On this basis the Board convened a meeting last year with the AMC and some of the specialist colleges to scope issues around the roles, responsibilities, pathways and processes for the assessment of specialist IMGs under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The Board agreed to establish a National Specialist IMG Committee to continue much of the work of the prior JSCOTS.

The Board formally appointed the Committee which includes:

- National Board members
- State or Territory Board members who are also current Registration Committee members
- Staff from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
- Representatives of the Australian Medical Council
- Representatives of specialist colleges, nominated by the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges
- Representatives of the States, nominated by the Health Workforce Principal Committee
- A representative of the Commonwealth Government, nominated by the Commonwealth
- A consumer representative nominated by Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- A specialist international medical graduate who has been through the specialist assessment process, nominated by the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges
- A representative of the Association of Medical Recruiters Australia and New Zealand
- A representative of Health Workforce Australia

The committee will meet quarterly and will publish reports after each meeting.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing report

The Board considered the recently released report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing on the inquiry into registration processes and support for overseas trained doctors. The Board welcomed the increased focus on International Medical Graduates (IMGs) and suggestions for initiatives to improve their experience of joining Australia's healthcare system. The Board's joint statement with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the AMC is available [here](#).

The Board will work with AHPRA and the AMC to respond to the report's recommendations and to review current processes to streamline and improve them where possible, without compromising safety and quality

Current consultations

The Board is currently consulting on the following matters:

1. Funding external doctors' health programs – consultation closes 5 April 2012
2. Registration standard for endorsement for acupuncture – consultation closes 14 May 2012
3. Draft Supplementary Guidelines on Cosmetic Medical and Surgical Procedures for "Good Medical Practice: A code of conduct for doctors in Australia – consultation closes 22 May 2012

All stakeholders are invited to provide feedback to the Board on these matters.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM

Chair, Medical Board of Australia

29 March 2012