MRCGP[INT]: Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners [International] – The international scheme to accredit locally developed assessments throughout the world

BACKGROUND: The Royal College of General Practitioners is aware of the need for high quality postgraduate assessments to be developed at a national or regional level in different parts of the world, tailored to local culture, practice, educational and health systems. The fundamental reason for the development of MRCGP[INT] and the creation of a new category of International Member, is to support the development of general practice/family medicine world-wide and, by doing so, to assist in raising standards of the discipline, being of equivalent academic rigour to the MRCGP in the UK.

The designation MRCGP[INT] may be given in addition to the qualification awarded by the relevant national examination/licensing bodies. Studying and preparation by Family Doctors, and the subsequent assessment, is intended to provide a focus and impetus for themselves, their academic organisations and their programmes.

There has been a very positive response to the development of an internationally recognised postgraduate qualification for General Practice / Family Medicine, equivalent in status to qualifications in hospital-based specialities. There are currently accredited sites for the MRCGP[INT] in Brunei, Dubai, Egypt, Kuwait, Malta, Oman and South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). It is intended that many others will be accredited in the near future.

AIMS: The MRCGP[INT] offers:
- Assessment criteria equivalent in academic rigour to the MRCGP examination in the UK;
- Impetus and focus to the educational aspirations of individuals and organisations;
- Academic support to local Examination Boards for:
  - Their own curriculum development, appropriate to their own context and not that of a doctor working as a General Practitioner in the unique context of the UK’s NHS;
  - The development of test design, writing, conduct and standard setting;
  - On-going quality assurance through the accreditation and re-accreditation cycle;
- Support for the philosophy of life-long learning, continuing professional development and quality practice.

METHODS: The academic model and framework for this exit examination, which often follows structured training programmes in Family Medicine rather than precedes them, has been developed by identifying those aspects of good primary medical care that are truly international, as well as the significant differences between countries and regions of the world in terms of culture, epidemiology, health systems and provision, as well as historical, geographic and religious aspects of healthcare. While the examination package of each MRCGP[INT]-accredited assessment will be somewhat different, reflecting these contextual aspects, the principles whereby they can be assessed to modern international standards and the criteria and the template against which assessment procedures from different health care systems might be developed, evaluated, endorsed, accredited and quality assured have been validated.

CONCLUSIONS: The award of the MRCGP[INT] confirms that the accredited examination is equivalent in academic rigor to the MRCGP assessment in the UK but appropriate for the curriculum of the local context of Primary Healthcare. Those are exit examinations successful candidate has attained a standard of competence as a Family Doctor, as tested by an assessment equivalent in rigour to the MRCGP in the UK, but appropriate for the curriculum of the local context of Primary Healthcare.

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