

Medical Board Staff Report

DATE REPORT ISSUED: April 3, 2017
 ATTENTION: Medical Board of California (Board) Members
 SUBJECT: Amendments to Physician Postgraduate Training
 Requirements in California
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UPDATE:

In response to the issue raised in the Board's Sunset Review Report, proposed statutory language was provided by Board staff to the Senate Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development (Committee) on April 4, 2017, for review and consideration. The language proposed changing the postgraduate training requirements for licensure from one or two years to three years for all graduates and to eliminate the Board's medical school recognition/approval process.

BACKGROUND:

Current law for postgraduate training requirements for licensure differs between graduates of US/Canadian medical schools and graduates of international medical schools. Applicants who graduate from a Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) approved medical school must successfully complete a minimum of one year of either Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)(US) or Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC)(Canada) accredited postgraduate training. Applicants who graduate from a Board recognized/approved international medical school must successfully complete a minimum of two years of ACGME or RCPSC accredited postgraduate training.

As a consumer protection agency, the Board does not believe that one year (for US/Canadian medical school graduates) and two years (for international medical school graduates) of postgraduate training is sufficient in today's environment. It is also not consistent with the minimum requirements for any of the ACGME accredited postgraduate training programs, which is a minimum of three years of successful completion of training. This is required for board certification by the American Board of Medical Specialties in specialties of family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics and other specialties. In addition, the Federation of State Medical Boards is also recommending all physicians satisfactory complete a minimum of three years of ACGME/RCPSC training to obtain full licensure. Therefore, the Board recommends revising the postgraduate training requirements for licensure from one or two years to three for all applicants regardless of the medical school of graduation. This additional postgraduate training will allow the Board to change its process for reviewing and recognizing international medical schools.

The approval of US/Canadian medical schools differs from the recognition of international medical schools. The US/Canadian medical schools undergo a standardized evaluation by the only US Department of Education medical school accreditation entity, LCME. The international medical schools undergo an independent evaluation process conducted by the Board, pursuant to California statutes and regulations. There currently is not an international accreditation organization similar to LCME; therefore, the Board must conduct its own evaluation of these

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schools to determine if they meet the same standards of the medical schools accredited by the LCME and approved by the Board. This evaluation, modeled from and consistent with the LCME assessment, requires an in-depth review of a variety of materials and reports, and the process can take as little as 30 days or as long as three or more years, depending on timely receipt and review of documentation, approval of the out-of-country travel proposal, completion of the site visit report, and final review and approval by the Board. In addition, the international medical schools recognized by the Board should be reassessed every seven years, modeled after LCME requirements for domestic schools. However, limits on staffing, resources, and qualified medical consultants to conduct timely, thorough reviews and render decisions result in delays in recognizing international medical schools. As a consequence, this impedes otherwise qualified candidates from beginning their postgraduate training, or getting their physician's and surgeon's certificate.

With the requirement of a full three years of postgraduate training in place, which will better allow the Board to evaluate whether the applicant is safe and competent to practice medicine independently, the Board will be able to streamline the recognition process for international medical schools by approving schools recognized by the World Directory of Medical Schools, which has been developed through a partnership between the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER). The Board will also be able to approve schools recognized by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), which is in the pilot stage of conducting international medical school accreditation. The ECFMG expects to have the international medical school accreditation in full operation by 2023.

If the proposed language is approved, the postgraduate training requirements for licensure will be three years for all graduates. Applicants would be required to obtain a postgraduate training license within six months after enrollment in a Board approved postgraduate training program. The postgraduate training license will be valid until three months following completion of three years of Board approved postgraduate training. This allows the applicant to complete the application process and the Board to have sufficient time to issue a full and unrestricted license without any interruptions of the individual's training or the practice of medicine. A holder of a postgraduate training license may engage in the practice of medicine as it relates to his or her duties as an intern or resident in an approved postgraduate training program, or as approved by his or her program director. Specifically, the holder may prescribe medications including prescriptions for controlled substances if the trainee holds the appropriate permit with the Drug Enforcement Agency and is registered with the Department of Justice, sign birth certificates, and sign death certificates. The proposed language also allows for a combined dental/medical degree programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation or approved by the board. The Board has requested the effective date to be January 1, 2020, to allow the Board enough time to implement the changes, as well as to work with stakeholders to ensure compliance with the new law.