

were consistent with those of college level students (Table 1).

We intend to continue this study over the next few years to track our current first-year undergraduate cohort, to see if these preliminary data are replicated in the future. If so, we as medical educators will need to consider how to promote the development of moral reasoning skills within the medical profession and other health care professions, to keep pace with growing demands for sophistication in this area.

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MCC evaluating examination and the international medical graduate

The information pamphlet on the Medical Council of Canada

(MCC) evaluating examination states that "Without exception, for eligibility to sit the MCC Qualifying Examination Part I, an IMG [international medical graduate] must have a valid pass on the MCC Evaluating Examination."¹

Given that the qualifying examination is designed and promoted as representing a minimal standard of the knowledge and problem-solving skills needed for general practice in Canada,² I do not understand the need for the evaluating examination. The IMGs who must take the evaluating examination include physicians who have completed residencies and fellowships in the United States with specialty and subspecialty certifications. Having these fellowship-trained and board-certified physicians go through the evaluating examination as a prerequisite for the qualifying examination seems redundant and unnecessary.

I am one such IMG. Originally from Pakistan, I have a total of 7 years of postgraduate training (including a US residency and a 2-year fellowship at Yale University). After earning neurology and clinical neurophysiology certifications in the United States, I worked as an assistant professor at the University of Manitoba for over 2 years. I successfully wrote my Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada examination in neurology in 2001 and was granted an unrestricted licence in Manitoba. However, when I filed a written request to write the MCC qualifying examination part I with a waiver of the evaluating examination, my request was turned down. I eventually wrote all of the required MCC examinations for the sake of obtaining a permanent Canadian licence, but at the cost of having to cancel clinics and make some patients wait even longer for care.

What is the MCC's objective in having such physicians complete the evaluating examination? Is this really a way of standardizing the delivery of health care, or is it a way of deterring qualified medical practitioners from entering into practice in Canada?

I suggest that the MCC seriously reconsider the objectives of the evaluating

examination and define circumstances in which qualified physicians would be exempted.

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[The MCC's Executive Director responds:]

Nizam Ahmed raises an important question: Why doesn't the MCC exempt IMGs who have received specialty training and been certified in a general clinical specialty in the United States from its initial evaluating examination and allow them to proceed directly to the 2 steps of the MCC qualifying examination?

The current requirement is that all candidates who have graduated from a medical school not accredited by the US Liaison Committee on Medical Education or the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools must pass the evaluating examination before undertaking the qualifying examinations.¹ This has been part of the MCC bylaws for over 25 years. Thus, it is not possible for the executive director or any other officer of the MCC to exercise discretion and "excuse" a candidate from the exam. Any change in admission eligibility would require a change in the bylaws. The policies and procedures that affect recruitment and licensure of IMGs are currently being reviewed by a national task force, which is due to report to the deputy ministers of health in December 2003.

Through the task force, issues such as those raised by Ahmed will be identified for all organizations concerned, including the appropriate ministries and the several bodies involved in the recruitment, hiring and licensure of IMGs. More specifically, Ahmed's concern has been noted by MCC staff and