

National resident match emerges for IMGs

A “pan-Canadian” approach for matching international medical graduates (IMGs) to residency positions in the nation’s postgraduate medical training system has inched a step closer to reality as a result of reforms to the Canadian Resident Matching Service’s (CaRMS) annual match.

The upshot of months of debate and intergovernmental negotiations about proposed changes to the 2007 residency match (*CMAJ* 2006; 175[2]:138) will be the creation of a CaRMS-run match for IMGs, although not all provinces will participate.

The match for graduates of Canadian medical schools, meanwhile, will continue to be run in its traditional form. After the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC) voted earlier this year to jettison the traditional 2 iterations of the annual resident match, it had been feared that Canadian medical graduates would be thrown into 1 competition hopper with IMGs, both Canadian and foreign-born.

But that possibility has now dissipated. The traditional 2-iteration process will continue to be used to match student to discipline and training program, except in Manitoba and Quebec. In those 2 provinces, both iterations will be open to recent Canadian medical school graduates (CMGs), as well as IMGs. In most provinces, how-

medical graduates, and enough positions for all Canadian medical graduates, and it’ll be a CaRMS process,” says AFMC president and CEO Dr. Nick Busing.

Although Manitoba and Quebec will not be offering a parallel, separate match for CMGs and IMGs, guarantees are in place to ensure that grads of their medical schools will find a home, Busing added. “It’s still a pan-Canadian CaRMS match, with enough positions for all of them.”

On the IMG side, the picture is murkier.

A 2-iteration process will be used everywhere except Manitoba and Quebec, (which are throwing everyone into the same hopper); Alberta, which will continue to independently fill its 40 available positions; and possibly, “in one other province, which still hasn’t decided whether to opt into the more national approach,” says CaRMS executive-director Sandra Banner.

Given that the provinces that are moving to a national CaRMS-run process will continue to set their own eligibility criteria, and that some aren’t participating, the end result will continue to be a somewhat fragmented system, Banner concedes.

But she argues that it’s still an enormous step toward properly integrating IMGs into the post-graduate training system.

“It means IMGs will be able to have the same advantages that Canadians have had, and that is a single date, trans-



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In 2007 a Canadian Resident Matching Service program will be created for international medical graduates, although not all provinces will participate.

the match, it’s all transparent. It’s all published. You know what positions are going to be available, in what disciplines and they’re all decided at the same time, so if you’re eligible in both B.C. and Ontario, you can compete and see which one you get.”

Although the provinces will use different eligibility criteria, the fact that those criteria will now be published in advance means IMGs will have time to complete whatever examinations or assessments are necessary in order for them to get the position in the province they want, Banner adds.

Standardization of criteria does not appear to be in the immediate offing, Busing adds. “I don’t think the provinces themselves can agree on the criteria. Because, as you know, certain provinces have developed assessment processes for IMGs and certain provinces have identified health human resource strategies which involve getting IMGs into their system and so, to standardize all of that doesn’t seem to be happening at that level.”

Still, Banner hopes it will ultimately lead to a harmonized approach.

“At least, for the most part, it’s all under 1 roof and 1 time line and 1 application, all those things that Canadians have enjoyed. It’ll make it a lot easier for them [IMGs] to access and to understand the access routes. Once we’ve got this piece, I think the rest will surely unfold and maybe perhaps, even a more pan-Canadian approach.” — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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ever, CMGs and IMGs will be in separate competitions, with the 2nd iteration being run for graduates unmatched in the first round; graduates from previous years and physicians seeking to change specialty or residents seeking to change locations.

In short, “we will have a match that has a protected stream for Canadian

parity in the system, fairness across all provinces. It’s a big, big improvement in the way IMGs can access post-graduate medical training in Canada.

In the past, they could compete for the second iteration but there were lots of other positions that were being offered at all different times. Nobody knew where, when and what. By using