Progress of the Canadian Task Force on Licensure of International Medical Graduates (IMGs)

Background

The Canadian Task Force on Licensure of International Medical Graduates was established in June 2002 with the mandate to aid in the integration of qualified internationally trained physicians into the Canadian workforce.

In February 2004, the Task Force released a final report containing six recommendations that were subsequently supported by the federal/provincial/territorial Ministers of Health. To address the recommendations, the federal government established the International Medical Graduate Implementation Steering Committee to assist with the federal government's coordinated response to each recommendation.

Immigration plays an important role in the health human resource strategies of provinces and territories and Health Canada continues to support initiatives that facilitate the integration of International Medical Graduates (IMGs).

Charting the Progress

This poster outlines the Task Force's recommendations, initiatives funded by Health Canada and other federal departments to address each recommendation and outcomes created by the projects.

Web links

Canadian Information Centre for International Medical Graduates
www.img-canada.ca
Health Human Resource Strategies Division
www.health-human-resources.ca
Medical Council of Canada
www.mcc.ca
The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada
www.afmc.ca

Conclusion

Work carried out in response to the recommendations of the Task Force on Licensure of International Medical Graduates has stimulated increased awareness of the challenges faced by IMGs in Canada. It has also contributed to the quality of the assessment and integration process for IMGs across the country.

Task Force Report (2004)

Recommendation 1
Increase the capacity to assess and prepare International Medical Graduates (IMGs) for licensure.

Recommendation 2
Work toward standardization of licensure requirements across Canada.

Recommendation 3
Expand or develop supports/programs to assist IMGs with the licensure process and requirements in Canada.

Recommendation 4
Develop orientation programs to support faculty and physicians working with IMGs.

Recommendation 5
Develop capacity to track and recruit IMGs.

Recommendation 6
Develop a national research agenda, including evaluation of the IMG strategy.

Initiatives

- Provincial projects to increase and enhance the assessment and licensure of IMGs using federal funding. Projects were funded in Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec. Funding was also provided, via the Western Alliance for the Assessment of International Physicians, to British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

- **Established the National Assessment Collaboration (NAC):**
  The Medical Council of Canada (MCC) established the NAC and worked with stakeholders to identify evidence-based criteria for the optimal screening of applications from IMGs seeking licensure in Canada and an approach to the assessment of each applicant that would ensure fairness and transparency.
- **Developed the Physician Credential Registry of Canada (PCRC):**
  The PCRC was a project led by the MCC in 2007 to establish a national verification standard for IMG core credentials.

- **Website - Canadian Information Centre for International Medical Graduates:**
  A central website provides basic information regarding licensure, programs and supports.
- **Online self-assessment tool:**
  An internet based self-assessment examination was launched by the MCC so that IMGs can independently complete a knowledge assessment online.
- **Increased access to the Medical Council of Canada's Evaluation Exam (MCCEE):**
  Access to the MCCEE has been increased to allow IMGs to test their skills against Canadian standards.
- **Considerations for Cultural-Communication, Legal, Ethical and Organizational Aspects of the Practice of Medicine (C2LEO):**
  The MCC and a team of Ontario researchers built upon the existing CLEO program and developed an interactive web-based learning tool that incorporates the cultural-communication aspects of medical practice. The purpose of the program is to identify behavioural benchmarks that assess a physician's ability to practice in a Canadian context.

- The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada developed and implemented a multi-media faculty development program for teachers of IMGs. This program aims to assist educators in working effectively with IMGs to maximize their success in postgraduate training programs.

- **IMG Database:**
  The Association of Faculties of Medicine administers the database to track IMGs through the licensure process from Canadian medical assessment to when they begin practice in Canada.

- Preliminary work has begun on developing a national research agenda.
  Health Canada has employed a third party consulting firm to evaluate the success of projects it funded in response to the recommendations of the Task Force.

Progress and Results

- Improved rigor in the assessment process.
- Raised awareness of IMG assessment issues.
- Facilitated an increase in the number of IMGs licensed to practice medicine.
  Of the IMGs who participated in Health Canada funded projects and returned surveys, approximately 70% reported being licensed to practice medicine in Canada by early 2008.

- Work towards the creation of evidence-based criteria for licensing authorities when screening IMG applications.
- Improved consistency in the credential verification process.

- The IMG website provides fundamental information that can be accessed by IMGs in Canada or overseas. The site has registered over 1.9 million "hits" since its creation, and a third (33.1%) of IMGs polled by Canadian Resident Matching Service in 2007 reported using the website often, indicating a clear demand for the information.
- Surveys revealed that the online self-assessment tool is an affordable online tool for IMGs which allows them to evaluate their readiness to apply for licensure in Canada and assists them in identifying areas they need to increase their knowledge and competence. From May 2005 until August 2007, over 3,700 self-assessments took place using the site.
- Test centres have been established in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, India, China and a number of other countries, allowing increased access to this examination for IMGs who will be better informed of their chance for successful licensure in Canada.
- Assessment of the C2LEO principles will be incorporated in the examinations of the MCC starting in 2008. The online availability of the C2LEO ensures that IMGs have quick access to information regarding expectations of cultural and communication standards for medical practice in Canada.

- The program has been implemented in all 17 medical schools across Canada and was modified for use by educators of internationally educated nurses and for use in other countries.
- A survey sent to those employing the program, including Deans of Medicine and IMG Program Directors, showed that the program was highly rated for utility and that all modules developed were rated either "very good" or "excellent."

- The development stage of the database will be completed in 2008.
- Data and statistics will be available online to the public, policy makers and other stakeholders.
- The process of building the database has also inspired stakeholders to discuss a Medical Identification Number for Canada which would allow governments and institutions to improve health human resource planning by having up-to-date figures regarding health providers in Canadian medical education and practice systems.

- The formative evaluation documented substantial progress on programs funded by Health Canada.