



United Kingdom

UK's General Medical Council Approves Plans to Establish New Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service

The United Kingdom's General Medical Council (GMC), the organization that regulates physicians in the UK, has announced a new service that will administer hearings for physicians whose conduct or ability to treat patients safely has been called into question.

The new Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service will begin running hearings for physicians as early as next year, according to the GMC. It will be operationally separate from the GMC's investigation arm and will be headed by a senior judicial figure, who will be responsible for appointing and managing its members.

If it receives Parliamentary approval, the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service will submit an independent report to Parliament every year.

In a three-month outreach to the health care community in the UK, more than three-quarters of those surveyed supported the plan to establish the new service. The GMC will now begin the process

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of appointing a chair of the tribunal, who the council says should have "significant judicial experience to run the service."

"This is a major reform and will signal clearly the need for panel hearings to be autonomous and to be seen to be autonomous," said Niall Dickson, the Chief Executive of the GMC. "In the consultation there was strong support for setting up the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service—for most respondents the question was simply how best to do it."

The GMC said it hopes to have the new chair installed later this year, or early next year, in order for the service to begin its work during 2012. ■

Source: General Medical Council website, August 2011

South Africa

Fraudulent Emergency Care Workers De-Registered by South Africa's Health Professions Council

The Health Professions Council of South Africa has announced that it has de-registered 400 of its members who apparently acquired fraudulent credentials to provide emergency care from the Limpopo Ambulance Training Academy.

The Council said it had evidence that many others had also received improper training or credentials and that it intends to de-register another 1,000 members.

The de-registrations followed an investigation into the quality of training that was being provided by the academy, located in Limpopo. A routine inspection earlier in the year had raised suspicions that fraudulent activity was occurring.

The de-registered workers were ambulance assistants responsible for the emergency care of patients. Tens of thousands of such workers are registered by the Council's Professional Board for Emergency Care.

The Council called on all employers to ensure their emergency care staff, who obtained certificates from Limpopo Ambulance Training Academy, have legitimate qualifications. The Council also warned prospective emergency care students to carefully check the accreditation status of schools they are considering for training.

"Unsuspecting students are being conned out of money and a prospective career by fly-by-night training centers," said Raveen Naidoo, chairperson of the Professional Board for Emergency Care. ■

Source: Health Professions Council of South Africa website, August 2011