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Australia

Results of First National Survey of Physicians-in-Training in Australia Released

Results of Australia’s first Medical Training Survey (MTS), conducted in 2019, have been released—creating the first national, comprehensive picture of the nation’s medical training. Nearly 10,000 physicians-in-training took part in the survey.

Dr. Anne Tonkin, Chair of the Medical Board of Australia, said the MTS results provide an evidence base that educators, employers and stakeholders across Australia’s health sector can use to improve the culture of medicine and further strengthen medical training.

“The 2019 survey results tell the start of an important and emerging national story about the culture and quality of medical training, from trainees’ perspectives. We hope the results trigger ideas and discussion about what we can all do to keep improving it,” Dr. Tonkin said.

In general, trainees rated their training—including clinical supervision and teaching—highly, according to the Board. Survey results indicate that most trainees would recommend their current

SURVEY RESULTS INDICATE THAT MOST TRAINEES WOULD RECOMMEND THEIR CURRENT TRAINING PROGRAM, BUT SOME AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT WERE NOTED—PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT.

training program, but some areas for improvement were noted—particularly in the area of bullying and harassment.

More than one in three trainees reported having experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination. Only one third of those who reported experiencing it, reported it.

Survey results showed that Australia’s Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander trainees are nearly twice as likely as other trainees to have experienced and witnessed bullying, harassment and discrimination in the last 12 months.

“We must all redouble our efforts to strengthen professional behavior and deal effectively with unacceptable behavior,” Dr. Tonkin said. “We must do this if we are serious about reshaping the culture of medicine and building a culture of respect.”

Trainee responses are presented in a series of reports and the data are also accessible through an online reporting tool, accessible at www.medicaltrainingsurvey.gov.au.

Source: Medical Board of Australia news release, February 10, 2020

Ahpra Returns More Than 40,000 Health Practitioners for Temporary Support During COVID-19

As health services in Australia scramble to prepare for expected surges in demand resulting from COVID-19, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and its various professional boards have announced a new pandemic sub-register to fast-track the return to the workforce of experienced and qualified health practitioners.

Ahpra, the Medical Board of Australia, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and the Pharmacy Board of Australia will establish a short-term pandemic response sub-register for the next 12 months.

The sub-register will enable physicians, nurses, midwives and pharmacists who previously held general or specialist registration and left the register of practitioners or moved to non-practicing registration in the past three years to return to practice. Only those who are properly qualified and competent will be returned to the register.

Ahpra will be contacting more than 40,000 practitioners who meet these criteria to alert them that

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they will be added to the new sub-register. There is no obligation for anyone added to the sub-register to practice or remain on it. They can opt out at any time, for any reason.

Practitioners who choose to stay on the pandemic sub-register and go back to work will need to comply with their profession’s code of conduct,

THERE IS NO OBLIGATION FOR ANYONE ADDED TO THE SUB-REGISTER TO PRACTICE OR REMAIN ON IT.

professional indemnity insurance requirements and work within the scope of their practice. After 12 months (or sooner if the pandemic subsides), they will be removed from the sub-register. If they wish to continue practicing, they will be able to apply for ongoing registration through Australia’s standard processes.

Source: Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency news release, April 1, 2020

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ECFMG

Match Day Adds More Than 7,000 International Medical Graduates to U.S. GME Programs

The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) has reported that more than 7,000 international medical graduates (IMGs) obtained first-year residency positions in U.S. programs of graduate medical education (GME) during the 2020 National Resident Matching Program®(NRMP).

“Comprising approximately one-quarter of our active physicians, IMGs are critical to meeting our nation’s health care needs, including the current health care crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said ECFMG President and CEO William W. Pinsky, MD. “We need every one of these qualified physicians to join their U.S. training programs on time, and we

are working aggressively to address any obstacles, such as immigration or travel restrictions, that would prevent these newly matched physicians from bringing their skills and talents to bear on the current crisis.”

IMGs practice in high numbers in medically underserved areas and in primary-care specialties. The most recent NRMP results are consistent with the trends for IMGs to join primary-care specialties, according to ECFMG, such as internal medicine, family medicine and pediatrics.

The number of IMGs who matched, at 7,376, represents an increase of 351 over last year’s Match, according to ECFMG. Of the 7,376 IMGs who matched, 3,154 are U.S. citizens and 4,222 are citizens of other nations. Sixty-one percent of IMG applicants were selected by U.S. GME programs in the competitive Match process, the highest IMG match rate in 30 years, according to ECFMG.

Before they enter U.S. graduate medical training, IMGs are assessed by ECFMG. ECFMG’s program for certifying IMGs includes passing components of the United States Medical Licensing Examination, the same examination required of U.S. medical school students and graduates. As part of the certification process, ECFMG verifies the authenticity of IMGs’ medical education credentials, including

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their medical diplomas, directly with the issuing medical schools. Only IMGs who are certified by ECFMG can enter U.S. graduate medical education programs.

Source: *ECFMG Reporter*, March 23, 2020

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IAMRA

IAMRA's Global Conference of Medical Regulators Cancelled

After giving consideration to the evolving concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA) and the Health Professionals Council of South Africa

'...OUR TOP PRIORITY MUST BE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF DELEGATES, STAFF, EXHIBITORS, SPONSORS, OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, AND OF COURSE THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA.'

(HPCSA) have announced that they will not proceed this year with the 14th IAMRA Conference, "HPCSA IAMRA 2020," originally scheduled to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 15-18, 2020.

In an online statement, IAMRA said it had been monitoring the international situation since January and that after South African President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster in South Africa on March 23, the decision was made to cancel the conference in 2020, postponing it until 2021.

"In line with the precautionary measures [Ramaphosa] announced, our top priority must be the health, safety and well-being of delegates, staff, exhibitors, sponsors, other stakeholders, and of course the people of South Africa. We strongly believe that this is the right decision in these unprecedented times," said Dr. TKS Letlape, IAMRA Chair and HPCSA President.

Individuals who have already registered for the conference will be contacted by HPCSA with information about refunding their registration fee. Those who have already made hotel reservations in Johannesburg should contact the hotel directly to cancel their reservation.

Details about the conference's rescheduling in 2021 will be announced in the future. For more information, please visit <http://iamra2020.co.za/>.

Source: HPCSA IAMRA 2020 website announcement

IAMRA Establishes COVID-19 Online Discussion Area for Members

With many of its members and partners active participants in the global response of the health care community to the COVID-19 pandemic, IAMRA has established a new COVID-19 thread on its Membership Forum.

IAMRA members can share updates, learn about innovations used by other medical regulatory authorities, and ask questions using this new online resource. Members are being invited to visit and contribute to the thread at www.iamra.com/forum.

For more information, including establishment or retrieval of member passwords in order to participate at the forum, please contact IAMRA at secretariat@iamra.com.

Source: HPCSA IAMRA 2020 website announcement

South Korea Latest Nation to Join IAMRA

IAMRA has announced its newest member, the Korean Medical Association, which has joined in the Partner category. IAMRA currently has 118 members from 48 countries.

Source: IAMRA website announcement

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Ireland

Physicians Answering Ireland's Call as Part of National COVID-19 Response

The Medical Council of Ireland has launched a dedicated pathway for physicians to re-join the Medical Council Register of Medical Practitioners as part of the nation's COVID-19 response — with all registration fees being waived.

"I am heartened to see the huge response we are seeing from colleagues who are coming out of retirement, returning to medical practice or returning home to Ireland in response to the challenges our country faces with the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dr. Rita Doyle,



President of the Medical Council. “These doctors are stepping forward to answer Ireland’s call to help our country at our time of need and to support our colleagues already on the front lines in this battle.”

According to the Council, physicians are stepping into a variety of roles, from working in hospitals to assisting with triaging cases remotely over the telephone.

Other health care regulatory organizations have taken similar steps to ensure the overall health care workforce is prepared to respond in Ireland. Shortly after the Council launched its registration pathway, Reuters reported what it termed a “huge response” to these efforts, with an estimated 24,000 people — ranging from retired physicians and nurses to therapists and university students with health care skills — registering with respective authorities in order to help.

In addition to facilitating physicians who wish to become active during the crisis, the Council said it is taking steps to ensure the health and safety of the physician workforce, saying that during the pandemic, they “have a duty to protect their own health and contribute to the safety and well-being of other healthcare workers.”

The Medical Council of Ireland has launched a dedicated COVID-19 webpage (www.medicalcouncil.ie/covid-19) with useful information and advice for physicians.

Those interested in re-joining the nation’s Medical Register are being asked to visit <https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/covid-19/>

Source: Irish Medical Council news release, March 26, 2020; Reuter’s news report, March 18, 2020

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United Kingdom

GMC Asked to Register More Physicians to Address Pandemic

The UK’s General Medical Council (GMC) has been asked to grant temporary registration to additional physicians under its emergency powers so that they are able to help with the coronavirus pandemic.

The extension has been agreed to in all four UK nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). By the

end of March, the UK had re-registered approximately 15,500 physicians, who had given up their registration or license to practice within the last three years. Thousands more were expected to be added in April.

Only physicians with no outstanding fitness-to-practice investigations or sanctions are being given temporary registration, and they are able to opt out of temporary registration at any point, for any reason.

Contact details of physicians with temporary registration are being shared with health services in the UK nation that matches their address. Physicians will be asked to complete a short survey by England’s National Health Service to help determine their skills

THE GMC HAS ALSO CONFIRMED THAT IT IS SPEEDING UP THE ANNUAL PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR FINAL YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS.

and how they can assist, wherever they live in the UK. This information is being shared with the health service in the other three countries if physicians reside in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

The GMC has also confirmed that it is speeding up the annual provisional registration process for final year medical students, with the goal of making available 7,500 newly qualified physicians to the UK’s health care workforce three months earlier than usual, if they are asked and willing to start work.

Students will still need to apply to the GMC for their provisional registration, which will only be granted once their medical school has confirmed their graduation. Owing to the extraordinary circumstances, the GMC will not charge any fees for registering these students.

The GMC has published a web guide to explain more about the temporary registration process. It also provides information from the four UK governments and health services to help physicians access the information they need about various aspects of returning to work.

Source: GMC news release, April 2, 2020

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