

Overseas Trained Specialists and Area of Need Assessment Committee

The last year has seen significant changes to the assessment requirements and processes for overseas trained specialists (OTSs) and prospective Area of Need (AoN) practitioners. In order to respond better to the rapidly changing OTS environment in which this College, and all others, must operate, the RANZCOG OTS/AoN Assessment Committee has been restructured. It is now a smaller group and concentrates on policy rather than actual assessment of OTS applicants, which remains the province of a panel of assessors. The committee, which meets three times a year, is chaired by Dr Diane Mohen and includes Dr Deryck Charters, Dr Chris Hughes, Dr Louise Kornman, Dr Rupert Sherwood, Dr David Somerset and Ms Kathy Sanders (Community Representative). The assessors complete the assessment interviews, which are held six days per year.

The RANZCOG OTS/AoN Assessment Committee has further developed its assessment policies and processes for overseas trained doctors. The completion of the Rapid Assessment Unit Project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, has facilitated the introduction of a more flexible and transparent assessment process that still holds paramount the public interest in quality of health care.

An important achievement of this project, which feeds into the OTS/AoN Assessment Committee, has been the development of the competency assessment document and its incorporation within the process of assessment of the OTSs who apply for assessment for Fellowship of the RANZCOG. The document, which defines the broad clinical and non-clinical competency areas against which OTS applicants are now assessed, was developed in accordance with the competencies identified in the RANZCOG Curriculum to ensure that the assessment of OTSs is based on the same expectations and standards as those set for RANZCOG trainees before they can receive Fellowship.

This new document was trialed in the OTS assessment interviews conducted in July 2006 and has been successfully used since its formal implementation at the September 2006 interviews. The assessors have found the document has enabled them to complete a more structured and focused assessment, though of somewhat longer duration. To address this demand on time, three more Fellows were recruited and a third assessment panel was established so that the number of interviews offered was not compromised.

Applicants assessed as 'partially comparable' to an Australia trained specialist must still complete the MRANZCOG examinations and the In-Hospital Clinical Assessments, however, they are now required to complete a minimum of 12 months (maximum of four years) of supervised training. At the conclusion of their training, the OTS trainee must have acquired competency in all of the areas of practice listed on the Competency Assessment Document.

A further development has been introduced via the new RANZCOG Constitution, which has enabled the College to broaden its categories of membership to include, in addition to Fellows and Diplomates, categories of Associate Members and Educational Affiliates. Under these arrangements, both AoN practitioners and those OTSs assessed as partially comparable, can now attain Educational Affiliate status with the College. This status enables the College to provide these Overseas Trained Doctors with access to the RANZCOG Continuing Professional Development program and a range of workshops, seminars and other activities through which they will be able to upgrade their skills and increase their knowledge of the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology in Australia.

In the past 12 months, the following assessments have been made of OTS applicants:

- 30 have been interviewed;
- 13 have been identified as 'substantially comparable' to an Australian trained specialist and therefore eligible to apply for FRANZCOG;
- 14 have been recommended as 'partially comparable' and required to undertake further training or assessment; and
- three have been recommended as 'not comparable' and asked to apply for admission to the training program at Year 1.

11 have been interviewed and ten have been considered suitable for an AoN post.

Dr Diane Mohen

Chair, Overseas Trained Specialists and Area of Need Committee

Belinda Boucher

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A witchdoctor aiding a pregnant woman in delivery. Carved wood. Bali. Donated by Dr Michael Simcock, 2005.