

**British Medical Association
International Department**

Guide to working abroad

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1. Introduction

The BMA International Department receives a large number of calls from members who want to spend some time working abroad, usually in English-speaking countries. We have produced this booklet, which is based on the most frequently asked questions, to help you plan and organise your time abroad as efficiently as possible. Because the majority of members who contact us only plan to go for a temporary period during their training, the content has been tailored mainly to their needs. Please note that the information contained in this guide was correct at the time of going to print.

If you would like any more information not included in the booklet, please contact the BMA International Department – internationalinfo@bma.org.uk

We try to be as helpful as possible, but we are limited by the type of assistance that we can provide.

The BMA can:

- provide general information on registration (in most popular destinations)
- advise on how to find a post
- advise on returning to the NHS
- guide members to other useful sources of information.

It cannot:

- find members jobs
- advise on overseas contracts
- provide lists of employers abroad
- assist with immigration arrangements.

The opening section of the guide provides a checklist of points that must be considered no matter where you are going. We emphasise that you should consider and plan all these points well before you leave the UK to avoid any unnecessary complications later on. This will help make your time abroad as rewarding as possible. The remainder of the booklet looks at four individual countries – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA – as well as opportunities for work in developing countries.

The BMA International Department has produced an information book, *Opportunities for doctors within the European Economic Area*, which addresses working in the EEA and is available at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/EEA

2. Planning a temporary career move abroad

2.1 Before you go

Immigration

All enquiries about immigration should be addressed to the appropriate High Commission or embassy in the UK. A directory of foreign embassies in the UK is available from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at:

www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029396086

Most High Commissions and embassies have comprehensive information on their websites about immigration procedures and will be your best source of information, especially since telephone information lines can be premium rate numbers.

Note: once you have entered a country on a visiting or restricted-work visa, you may find it difficult to switch your immigration status without leaving the country. Always check in advance.

Registration

The regulations governing registration are not always as clear-cut elsewhere as they are in the UK. In some countries registration is carried out at the regional level with requirements varying from region to region. Ease of registration will often depend on how much the country or region needs doctors. Most organisations recruiting doctors to areas of need will arrange registration for you.

Try to find out as much as possible about registration before you go, particularly the documentation required. In some cases, you may need a job offer before you can register. Another common requirement is a Certificate of Good Standing. This can be obtained from the General Medical Council (GMC) who will send it directly to the appropriate employer/health regulator. The conditions for registration will often depend on your individual circumstances and the BMA will not always be able to give you a definitive answer.

Contracts/terms and conditions of service

BMA staff cannot advise on specific terms and conditions of employment overseas. This is because these contracts are governed by overseas employment law, on which staff are not qualified to comment or advise. The BMA equivalent in the country of employment should be the first port of call for detailed industrial relations advice, and we recommend that you join as soon as possible.

Equivalency of grades

Remember that each country will have a unique medical training system designed to meet its own medical needs. UK training grades may not have an exact equivalent in another country. Make sure that you get as much information as you can about the duties and responsibilities of the position, and the training structure as a whole, before signing a contract. National medical associations can provide general information on career structure.

Medical indemnity

The medical indemnity scheme provided to all NHS-employed doctors by their employing authority does not cover any work undertaken overseas. You should, therefore, ensure that you take out separate indemnity insurance or appropriate defence body cover. UK-based defence bodies can advise you about the overseas cover they offer. If they do not provide cover for medical practice in the country you are going to, they should be able to refer you to defence unions abroad that do. You can also seek advice on local defence bodies from your prospective employer.

Overseas job vacancies

BMJ Careers often carries advertisements for both long- and short-term posts abroad. It includes hospitals, practices and academic institutes advertising either directly or through a UK- or overseas-based agency. The internet is also a good resource. Many agencies recruiting doctors for rural areas will sort out registration and immigration requirements for you. The BMA Library has a factsheet with useful careers

information and job vacancies for health professionals. Which is available at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/LIBJobVacancies.

Above all, try to use contacts in your place of work. Many doctors have worked abroad for a short period of time and may be able to offer you invaluable advice and contacts.

GMC register/BMA membership

Remember to notify the GMC and the BMA of your change of address. You must specifically ask the BMA Membership Department if you wish to receive *BMJ Careers* when abroad. Receiving it will help you to plan a seamless return to the UK. You can also access it online at www.careers.bmj.com

Financial matters

Points that you need to consider include:

- mortgages
- tax (home and abroad)
- insurance policies (property/life/medical/car/accident)
- savings and investment policies, national insurance and banking arrangements
- differences in the cost of living and how these might affect your financial planning.

Pensions

It is important to protect your pension benefits. Further information, including a factsheet on *Leaving the NHS*, is available to BMA members from the pensions department – tel: 020 7383 6138, email: pensions@bma.org.uk, or on the BMA website at www.bma.org.uk/pensions (you must be logged onto the website to view guidance notes).

BMA working abroad seminars

Working with BMA national offices and BMA Centres, the BMA international department arranges evening seminars on the subject of working abroad. These seminars are held at locations around the country and aim to give a general introduction to many of the areas covered in this guide. Expert speakers cover issues such as registration and immigration procedures, working for aid agencies, and integrating work abroad with an NHS career. For up-to-date information about forthcoming seminars please email the international department at internationalinfo@bma.org.uk

We are always interested in hearing from doctors who have worked abroad, to keep our information up to date and also as potential speakers for future working abroad seminars.

Healthcare immunisation and insurance

- Always check with your GP to confirm what immunisations are required well before you travel.
- The Department of Health has a section on its website providing health advice for travellers at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4123441 This website also includes information about reciprocal healthcare agreements for UK individuals travelling to particular countries.
- You are strongly advised to take out private health insurance if this is not included in your terms and conditions of employment. Make sure that the policy is appropriate (eg long trip, dangerous sports) and that you read the small print. BMA Services offers a range of travel insurance policies, and can be contacted on 0845 010 1120, www.bmas.co.uk

Pre-travel health advice

Fit for Travel

Travel health information website provided by NHS Scotland.
www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk

Hospital for Tropical Diseases: Department of Travel Medicine and Travel Clinic

Tel: 020 7388 9600 Fax: 020 7383 4817 (for appointments)

Travellers Healthline: provides detailed travel information by destination. For information about accessing country specific information and costs go to: www.thehtd.org/content/countrycodes.asp
www.thehtd.org/content/travel.asp

International Travel Health Clinic

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Pembroke Place, Liverpool, L3 5QA
Tel: 0151 708 9393 (for appointments)
www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/travel_health_services/travel_clinic/index.htm

National Travel Health Network and Centre

www.nathnac.org/index.htm

Royal Free Travel Health Centre

Tel: 020 7830 2885 (for appointments)
www.travelclinicroyalfree.com/

Trailfinders Travel Clinic

194 Kensington High Street, London, W8 7RG
Tel: 020 7938 3999
www.trailfinders.com/travelessentials/travelclinic.htm

The Travel Doctor

Has details of various travel clinics around the UK.
www.traveldoctor.co.uk/clinics.htm

Services for returned travellers

Hospital for Tropical Diseases

Mortimer Market Centre, Capper Street, London, WC1E 6AU
Tel: 020 7387 4411

GP referral is normally required, although patients who are unwell with fever or bloody diarrhoea can attend the walk-in emergency clinic without a referral Monday to Friday 09.00-16.00. At other times, emergency cases should go to University College Hospital A&E department.
www.thehtd.org/

Royal Free Hospital

Tel: 020 7830 2855 (for appointments)
No GP referral required – fee charged for consultation
www.travelclinicroyalfree.com/

Sources of further help

The internet is the most useful resource for doctors intending to work abroad. Details of registration and immigration procedures are readily available, together with downloadable application forms. You can also find information on healthcare systems, lists of hospitals, and job advertisements.

BMJ Careers often publishes articles on working abroad. Many can be found online in the *BMJ* archive at www.careers.bmj.com

There are many books which cover life and work in particular countries. Some of those which we have found helpful include:

Health professionals abroad, Tim Ryder, Vacation Work Publications (2000)

The medics guide to work and electives around the world (2nd Edition), Mark Wilson, Arnold Publishers (2004)

An important warning

To make life as easy as possible for yourself:

- plan well in advance – gather as much information as you can before you leave the UK
- make sure that you have everything in writing. Do not rely on telephone advice alone

- talk to your postgraduate dean, appropriate royal college and the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) if you wish your work overseas to count towards your training in the UK,
- if you are a specialty registrar, determine whether or not your national training number (NTN) will be held for you.

2.2 Returning to the NHS

The BMA encourages doctors to return to the UK after working abroad in the hope that their experiences will both enrich their own careers and benefit their future employers in the NHS. This section is intended as a guide to doctors still undertaking postgraduate training to help facilitate your return to the NHS. Please ensure you check with the appropriate bodies for the most up-to-date information.

Accreditation for training posts abroad

Work undertaken abroad **can count towards certification in the UK, but this must be agreed well in advance**. We suggest that you make an appointment to discuss your plans with your regional postgraduate dean at an early stage. At each grade, there are factors which must be taken into consideration.

Foundation programme

UK medical graduates are strongly advised to complete foundation years one and two sequentially before going to work abroad. The foundation programme is designed to deliver generic competencies in a range of settings over a two-year period. Specialist and general practice training programmes will only be open to those who have acquired and satisfactorily demonstrated foundation competencies. The PMETB has yet to determine whether or not training undertaken abroad in place of the second year will be recognised.

If you wish to do pre-registration training abroad, contact the GMC to confirm that this will lead to full registration in the UK. Some countries have no equivalent to pre-registration training, so these destinations would not be an option.

Postgraduate specialty training

There are some circumstances in which a trainee can ask to spend some time out of their specialty training programme. All requests of this nature need to be agreed by the postgraduate dean and trainees are advised to discuss their proposals as early as possible. Time out of programme (OOP) will not normally be agreed until a trainee has been in a training programme for at least one year.

Time out of programme for approved clinical training (OOPT)

If a trainee wishes their training undertaken abroad to count towards their CCT they need to obtain prospective training approval from the PMETB. Provided the OOPT has been agreed in advance by the postgraduate dean and you continue to satisfy the requirement for annual review you may retain your NTN. OOPT will normally be for one year in total, although this can be extended for up to two years with the agreement of the postgraduate dean.

Time out of programme for clinical experience (OOPE)

Clinical training that does not have prospective approval cannot contribute towards a CCT but may be classed as OOPE. A request to undertake OOPE must be agreed by the postgraduate dean. As with OOPT, OOPE will normally be for one year in total, although this can be extended for up to two years with the agreement of the postgraduate dean.

PMETB approval is not required for experience abroad that is not required by the training programme, such as undertaking development or disaster relief work. You will of course need to speak to your postgraduate dean if such work entails taking time out of your training programme. The recent Crisp Report – Global Health Partnerships – has included a number of recommendations to make it easier for UK medical staff to undertake humanitarian work abroad. The report is available at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_065374

Further information on working abroad during your specialty training programme is available from the new *Guide to postgraduate specialty training in the UK (the Gold Guide)*: www.mmc.nhs.uk/pages/news/article?227E16A3-42B1-4FCB-BF6B-CEF787F9743C

Break in service

Working abroad can affect continuous service terms with the NHS. However, if a doctor undertakes work overseas as part of a programme of postgraduate training, or a period of voluntary service with a recognised relief organisation, this would not be counted as a break in service and continuity would be

preserved. Doctors should seek the approval of their relevant postgraduate dean prior to undertaking any such work. BMA members should contact askBMA on 0870 60 60 828 for further information about breaks in service.

3. Working in the developed world

3.1 Working in Australia

The healthcare system

Australia's public healthcare system, Medicare, is funded largely from general taxation, which includes a Medicare Levy based on a person's taxable income. Australia's public hospital system is jointly funded by the Australian government and state/territory governments and is administered by state/territory health departments.

Medicare provides accessible and affordable healthcare to all Australians and is often provided free at the point of delivery. It covers in-patient and out-patient treatment at public hospitals and 85 per cent of government approved consultant fees. Individuals must pay to see their GP, but they are reimbursed part of the cost. All emergency care is free. The majority of Australians also take out private insurance as a back-up. Every doctor practising under Medicare must obtain a 'Provider Number' from Medicare Australia before being able to reclaim his or her fees.

Medical education

In Australia undergraduate degree programmes last for five to six years, whilst graduate entry programmes last four years. After their degree, Australian medical graduates undertake a 12-month internship. Upon satisfactory completion of their internship, they are granted full registration with the relevant state board or council.

Once fully registered, doctors undertake 'pre-vocational' on-the-job training as Resident Medical Officers (RMOs) or Hospital Medical Officers (HMOs) in Victoria. After one or two years as an RMO, most junior doctors seek admission to a vocational training programme run by one of the specialist medical colleges which set and administer the specialist medical training programmes and examinations. When doctors have met the entry requirements, they secure a registrar post which is accredited for training. Specialist training and practice generally follows the model of the UK training system and usually lasts between three and five years. Doctors training in general practice undertake their advanced training in designated private GP training practices in a community setting.

Upon successful completion of vocational medical training, and in compliance with other college requirements, a doctor is awarded a Fellowship of the College and recognised as a specialist. Additional sub-specialty training may also be undertaken.

Registration

Registration is regulated by the individual State Medical Boards, see below for contact details. There are two kinds of registration available, Registration Without Conditions and Registration With Conditions. For either form, you will need to prove that you have an adequate command of English, are of good standing and have the physical and mental competence to practise medicine.

Registration Without Conditions (full registration) enables doctors to practise unsupervised/independently. It is granted to graduates of Australian and New Zealand medical schools, after completing the approved period of pre-registration training, or to overseas graduates who have applied for migrant status and have completed the Australian Medical Council (AMC) examinations and a period of approved training. The AMC examinations consist of two multiple choice papers, and are a comprehensive test of medical knowledge, clinical competency and performance which evaluate clinical competence by testing principles and medical practice. The standard of the examinations are at the level of newly qualified graduates of Australian medical schools who are about to commence intern training. If you are not a native English speaker, you will also need to pass a language test.

Registration With Conditions is available to overseas medical graduates who will be temporarily in Australia to work in one of the following areas: postgraduate (occupational) training, supervised training, teaching or research, public interest or areas of need; or overseas trained specialists (following assessment by the relevant specialist college). The types of conditions vary depending on the category of registration and the individual doctor. Areas of need include positions/locations where there is a shortage of

particular doctors or where positions have remained unfilled despite recruitment efforts to fill them. Area of need covers both public and private sector posts. The state/territory governments determine Areas of Need and the process for doing so can vary. Further information should be sought from the state medical board about the locale in which you wish to work. Doctors with conditional registration are subject to supervision by an appropriately qualified Australian medical practitioner. Registration with conditions is granted for a specific post and therefore doctors working under conditional registration must reapply for registration if they wish to change jobs.

Doctors with specialist qualifications should apply to the appropriate Australian specialist medical college to have their specialist training and qualifications assessed to determine equivalence. This procedure is administered by the AMC, but the assessment is carried out by the specialist medical colleges. Once a specialist qualification is recognised by the college, you should contact the medical board in the state/territory in which you are intending to practise to obtain conditional registration in a specialist field of practice.

There are two types of specialist recognition: recognition by an Australian Specialist Medical College of a specialist qualification as equivalent to that of an Australian trained specialist and recognition as a specialist by Medicare Australia for billing purposes.

The former relates to medical registration and enables a specialist to practise independently/unsupervised. Australian state/territory medical boards/councils accept overseas trained specialists who are recognised by Australian/Australasian specialist medical colleges for registration to practise in their field of specialisation. The procedure is administered by the AMC, and the assessment of training and experience by the specialist medical colleges.

The second form of recognition enables specialists to provide services attracting a higher 'specialist' rebate under Medicare. In some cases Medicare requires that a service is provided by a doctor who has been formally recognised as a specialist and that the patient has been referred by another doctor, usually a GP. If these requirements are not met, either no Medicare benefit is reimbursed or it will be at a lower level.

Full details of the registration procedures can be found on the website of the AMC www.amc.org.au

Medicare

All doctors holding registration in Australia can obtain a Medicare provider number from Medicare Australia, enabling them to prescribe pharmaceuticals, order diagnostic tests and refer patients to other doctors. Doctors employed in general practice or private specialist practice must register with Medicare Australia to participate in the Medicare scheme and be eligible to have Medicare benefits paid for their professional services.

Since 1 January 1997 overseas doctors have had access to Medicare provider numbers restricted, with the restrictions being different for temporary and permanent residents. Generally temporary residents are unable to obtain a Medicare provider number unless they work in an approved District of Workforce Shortage – an area in which the general population's need for healthcare has not been met. For those who are permanently resident or have Australian citizenship the Medicare provider number restriction applies for a period of 10 years starting from the date of permanent residence or first medical registration in Australia, whichever is later. In some cases, this can be reduced to five years. For example, if a doctor is willing to take up a hard-to-fill position as a GP. Permanent residents working in a District of Workforce Shortage may apply for an exemption to the 10-year restriction. There are other restrictions for doctors with permanent residency which are listed in detail at www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/Provider+number+restrictions+for+permanent+residents

Immigration

According to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship the preferred temporary visa pathway for doctors is the Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa (Subclass 457) which has a streamlined application process. In order to apply for a visa you must first find a post, you will also need to provide evidence that you are eligible for registration with the appropriate State Medical Board. Alternative temporary immigration routes are the Medical Practitioner visa (Subclass 422) or the Occupational Trainee visa.

Further information is available from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's website at www.immi.gov.au/skilled/medical-practitioners/visa-options-doctors.htm

Finding a position

Posts are often advertised in UK medical journals such as the *BMJ* or the classified section of the *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)*. There are also many locum agencies specialising in employment in Australia, although the positions are often in remote locations rather than the more popular cities. The BMA cannot recommend, or provide lists of, specific agencies, but they advertise regularly in *BMJ Careers*. Many doctors find that once they have been offered a post, the employer will organise their registration and a visa for them.

Further details about finding a job are available on the Doctor Connect website at: www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/work-Finding-a-job

Useful addresses

Embassy/High Commission

Australian High Commission

Australia House, Strand, London, WC2B 4LA
Tel: 020 7379 4334 Fax: 020 7240 5333
www.australia.org.uk

National medical association

Australian Medical Association (AMA)

The AMA has a federal structure, with the main office in Canberra focusing on national issues and state branches focusing on state matters; they will also be able to advise you on local regulations concerning registration, as these differ from state to state in Australia. If you join, they will be able to provide expert legal, financial and industrial relations advice.

National office

Australian Medical Association, PO Box 6090, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia
Tel: +61 2 6270 5400 Fax: +61 2 6270 5499 Email: ama@ama.com.au
www.ama.com.au

State branches

New South Wales – www.nswama.com.au
Northern Territory – www.amant.com.au
Queensland – www.amaq.com.au
South Australia – www.amasa.org.au
Tasmania – www.amatas.com.au
Victoria – www.amavic.com.au
Western Australia – www.amawa.com.au

Competent authorities – state/territory medical boards/councils

Medical Board of the Australian Capital Territory

Ground Floor, Scala House, 11 Torrens Street, Braddon ACT 2612, Australia
Tel: +61 2 6205 1600 Fax: +61 2 6205 1602 Email: medicalboard@medicalboard.act.gov.au
www.medicalboard.act.gov.au

New South Wales Medical Board

NSW Medical Board, PO Box 104, Gladesville NSW 1675, Australia,
Tel: +61 2 9879 2200 Fax: +61 2 9816 5307
www.nswmb.org.au

Northern Territory Medical Board

PO Box 40596, Casuarina NT 0811, Australia
Tel: +61 8 8999 2400 Fax: +61 8 8999 2600
www.nt.gov.au/health/org_supp/prof_boards/prof_licensing_auth.shtml

Medical Board of Queensland

Medical Board of Queensland, GPO Box 1667, Brisbane, Queensland 4001, Australia
Tel: +61 7 3234 0176 Fax: +61 7 3225 2522 Email: registrations@medicalboard.qld.gov.au
www.medicalboard.qld.gov.au

Medical Board of South Australia

PO Box 791, North Adelaide SA 5006, Australia
Tel: +61 8 8219 9800 Fax: +61 8 8361 9422 Email: admin@medicalboardsa.asn.au
www.medicalboardsa.asn.au

Medical Council of Tasmania

PO Box 8, South Hobart, TAS 7004, Australia
Tel: +61 3 6233 5499 Fax: +61 3 6233 7986 Email: mct@medicalcounciltas.com.au
www.medicalcounciltas.com.au

Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria

GPO Box 773, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Australia
Tel: +61 3 9655 0500 Fax: +61 3 9655 0580 Email: info@medicalboardvic.org.au
www.medicalboardvic.org.au

The Medical Board of Western Australia

GPO 2754, Perth, WA 6001, Australia
Tel: +61 8 9481 1011 Fax: +61 8 9321 1744 Email: registrations@wa.medicalboard.com.au
www.wa.medicalboard.com.au

Royal colleges

Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists

ANZCA House, 630 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC 3004, Australia
Tel: +61 3 9510 6299 Fax: +61 3 9510 6786 Email: ceoanzca@anzca.edu.au
www.anzca.edu.au

Australasian College of Dermatologists

PO Box 2065, Boronia Park, NSW 2111, Australia
Tel: +61 2 8765 0242 Fax: +61 2 9736 2194 Email: admin@dermcoll.asn.au
www.dermcoll.asn.au

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

College House, 1 Palmerston Crescent, South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia
Tel: +61 3 8699 0414 Fax: +61 3 8699 0400 Email: racgp@racgp.org.au
www.racgp.org.au
www.racgp.org.au/overseasdoctors – information for international medical graduates

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

254-260 Albert Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002, Australia
Tel: +61 3 9417 1699 Fax: +61 3 9419 0672 Email: ranzcog@ranzcog.edu.au
www.ranzcog.edu.au

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists

94-98 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9690 1001 Fax: +61 2 9690 1321 Email: ranzco@ranzco.edu
www.ranzco.edu

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

Durham Hall, 207 Albion Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia
Tel: +61 2 8356 5858 Fax: +61 2 8356 5828 Email: contact@rcpa.edu.au
www.rcpa.edu.au

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians

145 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9256 5444 Fax: +61 2 9252 3310 Email: racp@racp.edu.au
www.racp.edu.au

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

309 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia
Tel: +61 3 9640 0646 Fax: +61 3 9642 5652 Email: ranzcp@ranzcp.org
www.ranzcp.org

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists

Level 9 51 Druitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 9268 9777 Fax: +61 2 9268 9799 Email: ranzcr@ranzcr.edu.au
www.ranzcr.edu.au

Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine

GPO Box 2507, Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia
Tel: +61 7 3105 8200 Fax: +61 7 3105 8299 Email: acrrm@acrrm.org.au
www.acrrm.org.au

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

College of Surgeon's Gardens, Spring Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia
www.racs.edu.au

Other useful contacts

Australian Department of Health and Ageing

www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/For+Health+Professionals-1

Australian Medical Council

PO Box 4810, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia
Tel: +612 6 270 9777 Fax: +612 6 270 9799 Email: amc@amc.org.au
www.amc.org.au

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Citizenship

www.immi.gov.au/index.htm,

Medicare Australia

www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/

Medical Journal of Australia online

www.mja.com.au

Royal Flying Doctors

www.flyingdoctor.net

Seek – jobsearch and career website

seek.com.au/healthcare/index.ascx

Mediventure

The Australian Medical Association Western Australia and the Western Australian Centre of Remote and Rural Medicine (part of the Department of General Practice at the University of Western Australia) provide short- and long-term medical support to rural doctors and the community of Western Australia under Mediventure. Suitably qualified medical practitioners (usually doctors with postgraduate qualifications in general practice medicine) are recruited from throughout the world. Medical practitioners from the

Western Australian Centre of Remote and Rural Medicine visit overseas countries during the year, outlining the program and detailing the opportunities of working in Western Australia. Mediventure provides the opportunity for both local graduates and overseas based doctors to experience a variety of rewarding medical experiences in rural areas of Western Australia. Further details on the program can be obtained from www.mediventure.com.au/

We are aware that the following organisations may be recruiting doctors in the next year to 18 months.

Queensland Health – Recruitment

www.health.qld.gov.au/

Tasmania – Recruitment

The Public Hospital system in Tasmania is looking for resident medical officers and registrars for the 2008 clinical year (starting in January 2008). Positions are available for a 12-month period with the possibility of extension. Interested applicants should contact jobsandcareers@dhhs.tas.gov.au and will need to provide an up-to-date CV and relevant information regarding IELTS and qualifications. Further info on the opportunities and healthcare system in Tasmania can be found at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/careers/

3.2 Working in Canada

Healthcare system

Canada, like Britain, has a well-established and comprehensive publicly funded healthcare service for the entire population – medicare. The service provides universal coverage for medically necessary hospital and physician services based on need rather than ability to pay. The biggest difference between the British and Canadian systems is that, although the federal government has the ultimate responsibility, the roles and responsibilities are shared with the provincial/territorial governments. The latter being responsible for the management, organisation and delivery of health services for their residents.

Primary care is the foundation of the healthcare system and patients do not pay for medical consultations or treatment and can have direct access to specialists without needing a GP referral.

Medical education

After completing an undergraduate course for two to four years, Canadian students then undertake a medical degree lasting three to four years. The final one or two years of this course are spent in hospitals or doctors' offices. Upon completion of their medical studies, they join a residency programme which provides additional training in an area of specific focus. Depending on the field of medicine they select, this can take between two and seven years. At the end of the residency programme, doctors take a final exam which entitles them to practise medicine.

The Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) matches doctors to training programmes. International medical graduates are able to apply to CaRMS provided they meet specified criteria. Further details are on the CaRMS website at www.carms.ca

Registration

Before an immigration application can be approved, international medical graduates must establish professional competence. Registration is under the jurisdiction of the medical licensing authorities in each province, which can be a complicated business. Most of the licensing authorities will require you to pass the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination (MCCEE), administered by the Medical Council of Canada (MCC). This is an exam for international medical graduates which tests general clinical competence in comparison with the standard of graduates from Canadian Medical Schools. It can be taken in French or English and is a general assessment of an individual's basic medical knowledge in the principal fields of medicine. Specialists who have been certified by a Board member of the American Board of Medical Specialties or certified by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada or the College of Family Physicians of Canada may request exemption from the MCCEE. Doctors wishing to apply to CaRMS need to have passed the MCCEE.

Once the MCCEE is passed, doctors can take the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE) Part 1. This is a one-day computer based test assessing an individual's competency for entry into supervised clinical practice in postgraduate training programmes. Sittings for the MCCQE Part 1 usually take place in spring and autumn.

In order to join the Canadian Medical Register as a Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada doctors are required to pass the MCCQE Part 2. To be eligible you will have to have passed MCCQE Part 1 and completed a minimum of 12 months postgraduate medical training. This training can be undertaken anywhere. The MCCQE Part 2 assesses an individual's knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for medical licensure in Canada. Some licensing authorities also require supplementary professional examinations and/or language examinations prior to registering a doctor.

All postgraduate residents and all practising physicians must hold an educational or practice licence from the medical licensing authority in the province in which they study or practise. Detailed information may be obtained from registrars in the Provincial Medical Regulatory (Licensing) Authorities at the addresses listed below.

Specialist qualifications gained overseas are no longer considered when granting a specialist licence in Canada. Instead you are now required to obtain a fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Further information is available at rcpsc.medical.org/residency/certification/img_e.php

Immigration

You need employment authorisation from the Canadian High Commission before leaving the UK, and will have to have a medical examination carried out by an approved GP. A list of designated medical practitioners who are able to conduct the medical examination can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/dmp-md/medical.aspx **Note:** Quebec has a similar, but separate immigration procedure. For more details see www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.asp

You will need to apply to the Canadian High Commission for a work permit, normally only issued on the basis of a temporary offer of employment, confirmed by a Canada Employment Centre certifying that there are no qualified Canadian citizens/permanent residents who are available to undertake the position offered. This would normally be a job offer which has been officially endorsed by the Canadian government. For further details, contact the Canadian High Commission in London.

Useful addresses

Embassy/High Commission

Canadian High Commission, Immigration Division

38 Grosvenor Square, London, W1K 4AA
www.canada.org.uk

National medical association

Canadian Medical Association

1867 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 5W8, Canada
www.cma.ca
www.cma.ca/index.cfm/ci_id/25297/la_id/1.htm#10 – for detailed information for international medical graduates

Competent authorities – Provincial Medical Regulatory (Licensing) Authorities

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta

2700 Telus Plaza South, 10020 100 St NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 0N3
Tel: +1 780 423 4764 Fax: +1 780 420 0651 Email: info@cpsa.ab.ca
www.cpsa.ab.ca

College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

400- 858 Beatty Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1C1, Canada
Tel: +1 604 733 7758 Fax: +1 604 733 3503
www.cpsbc.ca/cps

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba

1000-1661 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3T7, Canada
Tel: +1 204 774 4344 Fax: +1 204 774 0750 Email: cpsm@cpsm.mb.ca
www.cpsm.mb.ca/

College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick

1 Hampton Road, Suite 300, Rothesay, NB E2E 5K8, Canada
Tel: +1 506 849 5050 Fax: +1 506 849 5069 Email: info@cpsnb.org
www.cpsnb.org/

Newfoundland Medical Board

Suite 603, 139 Water St, Saint John's, NF A1C 1B2, Canada
Tel: +1 709 726 8546 Fax: +1 709 726 4725 Email: cpsnl@cpsnl.ca
www.nmb.ca/

Department of Health and Social Services

Registrar, Professional Licensing, Department of Health and Social Services, 8th Floor Centre Square Tower, PO Box 1320, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9, Canada
Tel: +1 867 920 8058 Fax: +1 867 873 0484
www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca/Features/Programs_and_Services/professional_licensing/physicians.asp

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia

Sentry Place, Suite 300, 1559 Brunswick Street, Halifax, NS B3J 2G1, Canada
Tel: +1 902 422 5823 Fax: +1 902 422 5035 Email: adenhollander@cpsns.ns.ca
www.cpsns.ns.ca/

Department of Health and Social Services

Government of Nunavut, Registrar, Professional Licensing, 2nd Floor NCC Building, Box 390, Kugluktuk, NU X0B 0E0, Canada
Tel: +1 867 975 5700 Fax: +1 867 975 5705 Email: jkalaserk@gov.nu.ca
www.gov.nu.ca/english/

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario

80 College Street, Toronto, ON M5G 2E2, Canada
Tel: +1 416 967 2603 Email: feedback@cpsy.on.ca
www.cpsy.on.ca/

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Prince Edward Island

199 Grafton Street, Charlottetown, PE C1A 1L2, Canada
Tel: +1 902 566 3861 Fax: +1 902 566 3986
www.cpspei.ca/

Collège des médecins du Québec

2170, boulevard René-Lévesque Ouest, Montréal, QC H3H 2T8, Canada
Tel: +1 514 933 4441 Fax: +1 514 933 3112 Email: info@cmq.org
www.cmq.org/

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan

500-321A 21st Street East, Saskatoon, SK S7K 0C1
Tel: +1 306 244 7355 Fax: +1 306 244 0090 Email: cpss@quadrant.net
www.quadrant.net/cpsy/

Yukon Medical Council

Box 2703 C-19, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6, Canada
Tel: +1 867 667 3774 Fax: +1 867 393 6483 Email: ymc@gov.yk.ca
www.yukonmedicalcouncil.ca/

Other useful contacts

Canadian Medical Protective Association

PO Box 8225, Station 'T', Ottawa, ON K1G 3H7, Canada
Tel: +1 613 725 2000 Fax: +1 613 725 1300 Email: feedback@cmpa.org
www.cmpa-acpm.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

www.cic.gc.ca

College of Family Physicians of Canada

2630 Skymark Avenue, Mississauga, ON L4W 5A4, Canada
Tel: +1 905 629 0900 Fax: +1 905 629 0893
www.cfpc.ca

Click on chapters to see the regional branches contact details

Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada

2283 St Laurent Boulevard, Suite 103, Ottawa, ON K1G 5A2, Canada
Tel: +1 613 738 0372 Fax: +1 613 738 9169 Email: info@fmrac.ca
www.fmrac.ca

Health Canada online – Department of Health website on working in Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/

Medical Council of Canada

P O Box 8234 Stn T, Ottawa, ON K1G 3H7, Canada
Tel: +1 613 521 6012 Fax: +1 613 521 9417
www.mcc.ca

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

774 Echo Drive, Ottawa, ON K1S 5N8, Canada
Tel: +1 613 730 8177 Fax: +1 613 730 8830 Email: info@rcpsc.edu
rcpsc.medical.org

Society of Rural Physicians of Canada

www.srpc.ca

3.3 Working in New Zealand

Healthcare system

The New Zealand healthcare system was one of the role models for the NHS and there are still many similarities. Primary healthcare, including general practice, out-patient services, and prescriptions, is funded by a combination of public subsidy and private contributions. People can choose which GP or medical centre they visit. Most doctors set their own fees, however, in respect of general practice every patient enrolled in a general practice that is linked to a Primary Health Organisation has their fee partly subsidised by the government. Secondary healthcare services, including acute hospital treatment, are free to those who meet the eligibility criteria. There has been an increase in New Zealanders who have private health insurance and there are many private hospitals, most of which specialise in minor procedures.

Medical education

There are two medical schools in New Zealand in Auckland (Auckland University Faculty of Medical Health and Sciences) and Dunedin (Otago School of Medical Sciences). The latter school also has branches in Christchurch and Wellington where study can be undertaken for years four, five and six. Undergraduate degree programmes last for six years with the sixth year being worked as a trainee intern in a hospital. Upon completion of their medical degree, individuals are registered as doctors and work for the next two years as house surgeons. It is compulsory to do six months of medicine and six months of surgery in order to get registration. After completing a second-year house surgeon post, doctors will then work as a senior house officer for one to two years. After this time, they can start working as a registrar, without being on a training programme, or they can begin training as a junior registrar in their chosen specialty. During the training programme, doctors must take the specialist examinations. When they have passed both parts of these exams, they can apply for senior registrar posts. Specialist training lasts for five to six years, and upon successful completion doctors are eligible to apply for consultant posts.

Registration

In New Zealand there are no registration categories (eg full registration, specialist registration). Instead, doctors are registered in a 'scope of practice'. Your scope of practice will depend on your qualifications, experience and the purpose and duration of your employment in New Zealand.

All new registrants, regardless of seniority, must work under supervision for at least their first 12 months in New Zealand to become familiar with the culture. During this time they are registered within a provisional general scope of practice and their performance will be assessed by senior colleagues. They will be required to complete certain requirements to be registered within a general scope.

If doctors do not satisfy the requirements for registration within a provisional general scope of practice, they will have to sit the New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX) or apply for admission to the vocational register by having their postgraduate qualification assessed by the relevant New Zealand or Australasian college. To be eligible to apply to sit NZREX, candidates must hold a medical degree listed in the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) International Medical Education Directory, have passed, or been exempted from the IELTS test (International English Language Testing System) within the last two years (or five years for repeat candidates) and within the last five years have passed the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Steps 1 and 2 (Clinical Knowledge) **or** have passed the Australian Medical Council MCQ examination **or** have passed the Professional and Linguistics Assessments Board Part 1, administered by the General Medical Council.

Doctors who satisfy the requirements for admission to a branch/sub-branch of medicine (specialties) can apply for vocational registration. In New Zealand, general practice is considered a branch of medicine, therefore GPs can apply for vocational registration. Success in the NZREX or admission to the vocational register will lead to provisional registration, which is usually followed by a 12-month supervised probationary period, eventually leading to general registration.

In New Zealand all forms of registration are granted only when a doctor has a confirmed job offer under supervision in an approved hospital, practice or educational institution. The registration application should be submitted to the prospective employer, who will check it and send to the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) with a supporting application.

Registration and the NZREX examinations are regulated by the MCNZ and full details can be found on its website at www.mcnz.org.nz

Immigration

If you intend to stay less than three years in New Zealand, you should apply for a temporary work permit. You will need to show your eligibility for registration, evidence of a job offer and confirmation from your employer that the vacancy could not be filled by a New Zealand resident. For periods longer than three years, you will need to apply for a residence visa, probably under the category General Skills. Like the Australian system, this also operates on a points basis. Further information can be obtained from the New Zealand High Commission in London or the consulates in Belfast and Edinburgh.

Finding a position

Posts are often advertised in UK medical journals such as the *BMJ* or the careers section of the *New Zealand Medical Journal* available at: www.nzma.org.nz/journal/vacancies.htm Posts are also advertised in *New Zealand Doctor* and *New Zealand GP* and there are agencies which can help find employment in New Zealand.

The New Zealand Rural GP Locum Scheme arranges locum placements for rural general practitioners. More information is available from the New Zealand Medical Association website.

Useful addresses

Embassy/High Commission

New Zealand High Commission

New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London, SW1Y 4TQ
Tel: 020 7930 8422 Fax: 020 7839 4580 Email: aboutnz@newzealandhc.org.uk
www.nzembassy.com/home.cfm?c=14

National medical association

New Zealand Medical Association

PO Box 156, Wellington, New Zealand
Tel: + 64 4 472 4741 Fax: + 64 4 471 0838 Email: nzma@nzma.org.nz
www.nzma.org.nz
www.nzma.org.nz/about/info-for-foreign-doctors.html

Competent authority

Medical Council of New Zealand

PO Box 11649, Wellington, New Zealand
Tel: + 64 4 384 7635 Fax: +64 4 385 8902 Email: firstenquiry@mcnz.org.nz
www.mcnz.org.nz

Royal colleges

Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists

PO Box 25506, Wellington, New Zealand
Tel: +64 4 499 1213 Fax: +64 4 499 6013 Email: anzca@anzca.edu.au
www.anzca.edu.au

Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners

PO Box 10440, Wellington, New Zealand
Tel: +64 4 496 5999 Email: rnzcgp@rnzcgp.org.nz
www.rnzcgp.org.nz

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

PO Box 10611, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: +64 4 472 4608 Fax: +64 4 472 4609 Email: swilliams@ranzcog.edu.au

www.ranzcog.edu.au

Royal Australia New Zealand College of Ophthalmology

Branch Office c/o NZMA, PO Box 156, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: 64 4 472 4741 Fax: 64 4 471 0838 Email: nz.br.ranzco@nzma.org.nz

Branch Officer: Mrs Raewyn Whitehead

www.ranzco.edu/

Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

www.rcpa.edu.au

Royal Australasian College of Physicians

PO Box 10601, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: +64 4 472 6713 Fax: +64 4 472 6718 Email: racp@racp.org.nz

www.racp.edu.au

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

PO Box 10 669, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: + 64 4 472 7247 Fax: + 64 4 472 7246 Email: nzoffice@ranzcp.co.nz

www.ranzcp.org

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists

NZ Branch Office, PO Box 10 424, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: +64 4 472 6470 Fax: Fax +64 4 472 6474 Email: nzbranch@ranzcr.org.nz

www.ranzcr.edu.au

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Tel: +64 4 385 8247 Email: college.NZ@surgeons.org

www.racs.edu.au

New Zealand Accident and Medical Practitioners Association

202 Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby, Auckland

Tel: +64 9-3765783 Fax: +64 9-3765783 Email: info@ampa.co.nz

www.ampa.co.nz

Other useful contacts

The Association of Salaried Medical Specialists

PO Box 10763, Wellington, New Zealand

Tel: +64 4 499 1271 Fax: +64 4 499 4500

www.asms.org.nz

Australian Medical Council – MCQ Examination

www.amc.org.au/datefees.asp

ECFMG for United States Medical Licensing Examination

www.ecfm.org/usmle/index.html

Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research

imed.ecfm.org/

General Medical Council – PLAB test

www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/plab/index.asp

International English Language Testing System

www.ielts.org

New Zealand Health Online

Lists District Health Boards (DHB), hospitals and job opportunities in New Zealand.
www.everybody.co.nz

New Zealand Immigration Service

All visa enquiries should be directed to the NZIS.
Email: info@immigration.govt.nz
www.immigration.govt.nz

New Zealand Ministry of Health

www.moh.govt.nz

Working in New Zealand

www.workingin-newzealand.com/

3.4 Working in the USA

Healthcare system

There are four major sources of funding for healthcare in the USA: patients' own resources, private insurance, federally funded Medicare insurance for the elderly and disabled, and Medicaid insurance for low-income people, funded equally by the state and federal governments.

Primary-care physicians (PCPs) – general internists, family physicians and paediatricians – are frequently used, but many patients seek specialist care directly – and such care is paid for by Medicare and Medicaid. Many private insurance plans require referral from a PCP. Doctors in the USA are generally well paid and have access to some of the most sophisticated and up-to-date treatments in the world. However, the threat of litigation is omnipresent.

Medical education

Most American students complete an undergraduate (baccalaureate) degree of four years' length before starting their medical education, which lasts for a further four years and leads to a Doctor of Medicine Degree (MD). When they have attained their MD, they apply for residency programmes (specialist training), which comprise their graduate medical education (GME). These are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), normally last between three and seven years, depending on the specialty and/or subspecialty involved, and once completed, enable doctors to practise as consultants in the USA. Some overseas specialist training can be counted to reduce the length of the residency programme. Doctors wishing to sub-specialise can undertake a fellowship programme, which involves an additional one to three years training, after completing the residency programme.

Registration for international medical graduates (IMGs)

IMGs need certification from the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) in order to be eligible to enrol in a GME program and eventually apply for licensure to practice medicine.

To proceed towards ECFMG certification, your medical school and the year that you graduated must be in the International Medical Education Directory – imed.ecfm.org. Assuming your medical school and year are listed you will need to satisfy the Medical Science Examination Requirement, which entails passing Step 1 (basic medical) and Step 2 (clinical knowledge) of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE). These parts can be taken before you complete your medical degree. You will then need to satisfy the Clinical Skills Requirement, by taking USMLE Step 2 (clinical skills), which assesses whether you can demonstrate the fundamental clinical skills essential for safe and effective patient care under supervision. It has three subcomponents: integrated clinical encounter, communication and interpersonal skills, and spoken English proficiency. At the time of writing, USMLE Steps 1 and 2 (both parts) must be passed within a seven-year period. Full details are available from the ECFMG website – www.ecfm.org

Once you have completed the above, you will receive a Standard ECFMG Certificate, which can be used for entry into an ACGME-accredited GME programme. This certificate is not subject to expiration for the purposes of entering GME programmes.

Medical licensure

When the GME is completed, a physician must obtain a License to Practise from the state(s)/jurisdiction(s) in which they wish to practise. All states/jurisdictions require anywhere from one to three years of GME for licensure.

For licensure you must also pass Part 3 of the USMLE examination, which assesses whether a physician can apply the medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science considered essential for the unsupervised practice of medicine, with emphasis on patient management in ambulatory settings. It is administered by each individual state through its state medical licensing authority and is generally taken after the first year of GME.

Doctors who are already on the UK specialist register may be able to apply for partial exemption from the residency programme requirement and should therefore contact the relevant specialty board in the US (visit www.abms.org to find the appropriate board)

Board certification

Many US doctors elect to become Board certified. This is a voluntary process, unlike medical licensure. Doctors are tested, via written and oral examinations, to assess their knowledge, skills and expertise and, if successful, are deemed qualified to provide quality patient care in their chosen specialty. Certification is through 24 specialty medical boards, and most must be renewed throughout a six to 10 year 'maintenance of certification' cycle, depending on the specialty. The medical boards are: Allergy and Immunology, Anesthesiology, Colon and Rectal Surgery, Dermatology, Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Medical Genetics, Neurological Surgery, Nuclear Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otolaryngology, Pathology, Paediatrics, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Plastic Surgery, Preventive Medicine, Psychiatry and Neurology, Radiology, Surgery, Thoracic Surgery, and Urology. Further details are available from the American Board of Medical Specialties at www.abms.org

Immigration

Employment visas are usually not issued until you have obtained ECFMG certification. There are then two options: a temporary or settlement visa. Temporary visas are available as an Exchange Visitor (J1), for those taking an appointment under an officially approved programme and sponsored by an educational institution, and as a Temporary Worker (H1), for those working in a highly skilled job for which there is no US worker available. This must have prior approval by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The ECFMG is authorised to sponsor foreign national physicians for the J-1 visa. See ecfm22.securesites.net/evsp/ for more information. Doctors working on a J1 visa are required to return home for at least two years following their training before being eligible for certain US visas. Also, they are only issued to doctors who have a letter from the Department of Health, confirming that they will return to the UK on completion of their training.

Settlement visas are issued in a variety of categories, including family member of a US citizen, exceptionally skilled professional workers and professional workers with skills in short supply in the USA.

Employment visas are extremely difficult to obtain and advice should be obtained from the Visa Department of the American Embassy in London as soon as possible. There are also consulate offices in Belfast, Cardiff (limited services) and Edinburgh.

There is comprehensive information about immigration for international medical graduates on the AMA website at www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1553.html

Finding a position

The AMA recommends that international medical graduates undertake observership rotations in a clinical setting before applying to residency programs. These provide invaluable knowledge of US clinical practice settings and with US physicians who can serve as references. There is comprehensive information about residency programs on the AMA website, as part of the AMA's international medical graduates section, at www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1554.html

The *Graduate medical education directory*, known as the 'Green Book', provides information on accredited residency/fellowship programs in the USA and is available for purchase from the AMA. More detailed information on residency programs is available from the AMA's FREIDA Online database (Fellowship and Residency Electronic Interactive Database Access) at www.ama-assn.org/go/freida

Residency applicants must register with the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP), known as the Match, which computer matches applicants and hospital residency programs according to the ranked preference lists each submits. Applicant registration begins in mid-August and the Match takes place the following March. Further details are available from the NRMP website at www.nrmp.org

Useful addresses

Embassy/High Commission

US Embassy

United States Embassy, 24 Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 1AE

Tel: 020 7499 9000

Operator visa assisted information service: 09042 450 100 (premium rate)

www.usembassy.org.uk

National medical association

American Medical Association

515 North State Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610, USA

www.ama-assn.org/go/imgs (International Medical Graduates Section)

Competent authorities

Federation of State Medical Boards

www.fsmb.org/directory_smb.html – lists contact details for all of the state medical boards

Other useful contacts

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education

www.acgme.org

American Board of Medical Specialists

1007 Church Street, Suite 404, Evanston, IL 60201-5913, USA

Tel: +1 847 491 9091

www.abms.org

www.abms.org/About_ABMS/member_boards.aspx – for contact details for the individual medical boards

Association of American Medical Colleges

www.aamc.org

Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (for USMLE)

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104–2685, USA

Tel: +1 215 386 5900 Fax: +1 215 386 9196 Email: info@ecfmfg.org

www.ecfmfg.org

The Fulbright Commission

www.fulbright.co.uk

National Resident Matching Program

www.nrmp.org

Physician's Insurers Association of America

2275 Research Boulevard, Suite 250, Rockville, MD 20850, USA

www.piaa.us

3.5 Working in the European Economic Area

The European Economic Area (EEA) consists of the countries of the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA). It came into being on 1 January 1994. EFTA countries are bound by, and benefit from, the majority of European Community (EC) legislation, including that which relates to free movement and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. This legislation has led to greater opportunities for doctors in Europe. Although the practicalities of employment vary from country to country, doctors are entitled to full registration in any country in the EEA providing:

- they are citizens of a member state; and
- they have completed primary training in a member state and hold a recognised qualification.

An agreement between Switzerland, the EU and its member states on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications came into force on 1 June 2002. Under this agreement doctors are entitled to full registration in Switzerland provided they fulfil the aforementioned two criteria.

Countries in the EEA are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland (EFTA), Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein (EFTA), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Malta, Norway (EFTA), Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The BMA International Department has produced a comprehensive information book for doctors who are thinking of working in the EEA, entitled *Opportunities for doctors within the European Economic Area*, which is available from the BMA website at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/EEA

4. Working in the developing world

Many doctors are interested in putting their skills and experience to good use by working in the developing world. This can be an immensely satisfying experience, both personally and professionally, and the benefits are recognised by the BMA, several royal colleges and a growing number of NHS Trusts.

Although it is possible to arrange a position yourself, most doctors join one of the aid agencies with experience and infrastructure in the area. Depending on the agency, much of the groundwork such as registration, logistics and immigration formalities may be done for you, although you will need to check all the points mentioned in the earlier sections.

Some of the agencies which specifically recruit doctors are listed below but you should be aware that opportunities will vary according to your experience and qualifications, and the areas where need is greatest. Some agencies operate in certain geographical regions, some specialise in emergency relief and others concentrate on training local health workers. Your own expectations and limitations, for example family commitments or availability at short notice, will have a considerable effect on the agency to which you apply.

The Department of Health published a *Humanitarian and health work toolkit* to support good practice in July 2003. This is aimed at helping to strengthen the capacity and capability of the NHS in England to assist with international development and humanitarian emergencies. The toolkit is available from the Department of Health website at: www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/45/76/04074576.pdf

The Scottish Executive has a pilot programme with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) that involves releasing 20 volunteers, with a guarantee of re-employment at the same level on return. It has also negotiated arrangements with the NHS Pension Agency to maintain their pension continuity. A similar proposal has been put forward by VSO for a similar scheme in England with people volunteering for between three months and two years.

Continued NHS pension scheme membership is possible if a doctor is working for certain overseas aid organisations (Oxfam, Save the Children, for example) under specified conditions. Further details are available to BMA members from the pensions department by emailing pensions@bma.org.uk

Requirements

Almost all agencies recruit doctors with at least two to three years post-registration experience. Those with a broad range of experience are preferred, although there are opportunities for consultants in certain specialised fields (such as surgery). Experience in general practice, obstetrics and gynaecology, accident and emergency, paediatrics, and public health is particularly useful and some agencies also require the Diploma in Tropical Health and Hygiene. Other valuable assets are experience of teaching or training and, occasionally, foreign languages.

A sound professional background must be combined with the required personal characteristics. These will vary according to the project, but those which feature prominently in most recruitment requirements are flexibility, sensitivity, motivation, resourcefulness and stamina.

What you can expect

Once you have been recruited, you may be put on a register for future use or be placed in a project immediately. Placement length varies considerably, although you can usually expect to work for between six months and two to three years. Most agencies will pay for flights, insurance and a moderate salary, but many will also cover accommodation, food and even journal subscriptions. Some agencies provide training and support both before and during the placement and have established returned volunteer networks to assist your reintegration with the NHS and life in the UK.

Although working in a developing country can be frustrating and exhausting, both physically and emotionally, it can also be exciting and extremely rewarding. It can give you a unique insight into another culture and the opportunity to work with a team of many nationalities and backgrounds. You will learn to adapt your previous experiences and use a variety of new skills which will be of great use in the future, both in your medical career and in your personal development.

The organisation People in Aid has produced a *Code of best practice* for agencies working in developing countries. This covers issues such as health and safety, training and support, and is useful background reading when considering which agency to choose, www.peopleinaid.org.uk/code The Department of Health *International humanitarian and health work toolkit to support good practice* is also a useful reference guide for healthcare professionals assisting with humanitarian emergencies and international development. It can be viewed at: www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/45/76/04074576.pdf

The Department of Health has produced a *Code of practice for the international recruitment of healthcare professionals*. Whilst this publication is a code of practice for NHS employers involved in the international recruitment of healthcare professionals, it may be of interest to those working in developing countries. It can be viewed on the www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4097730

Useful contacts

The following list of agencies employing doctors in developing countries is by no means comprehensive.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

MSF is an independent humanitarian medical aid agency providing emergency medical relief to the victims of natural and non-natural disasters. Typical positions would involve working in refugee camps or rebuilding medical infrastructure which has been destroyed by conflict. Doctors are frequently needed at short notice and time in post varies, although you are generally required to be available for nine-12 months. Volunteers must have at least two years' experience at SHO level or above. For those who have undertaken the foundation programme you must have completed, as a minimum, your F2 and one subsequent year. It is helpful to have received training in tropical medicine and/or infectious disease. The most useful specialties are obstetrics and gynaecology, accident and emergency, public health, infectious diseases, GP VTS and paediatrics. Other skills which are useful are teaching or training experience and some knowledge of Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese or Russian. MSF provides a basic salary, accommodation and medical insurance, pre-departure training and support both in the field and on return.

Médecins Sans Frontières

67-74 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8QX
Tel: 020 7404 6600 Fax: 020 7404 4466 Email: office-ldn@london.msf.org
www.uk.msf.org

Médécins du Monde UK

Médécins du Monde is a medical, humanitarian, non-governmental organisation which relies on volunteer health professionals to participate in its projects throughout the world – in both developing and developed countries. It provides medical assistance to vulnerable populations in emergency situations and where there have been long-term effects arising from political and economic development.

Médécins du Monde UK

14 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB
Tel: 020 7515 7534 Fax: 020 7515 7560 Email: info@medecinsdumonde.org.uk
www.medecinsdumonde.org.uk

Medical Emergency Relief International (MERLIN)

MERLIN's overall aim is to improve the health of populations affected by conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics and health systems collapse through the provision of appropriate and accessible healthcare. It concentrates on emergency medical relief and intensive training. Typical posts would involve working to rebuild medical systems, running clinics and education and nutrition programmes. Areas in which MERLIN are currently active include Afghanistan, Georgia and Somalia. Recruits are either sent immediately or put on the Emergency Register, from which they can be called to a project as soon as the need arises. Posts are usually for six to 12 months and include briefings, accommodation, monthly allowance, flights and insurance. MERLIN does not require previous aid agency experience.

MERLIN

12th Floor, 207 Old Street, London, EC1V 9NR
Tel: 020 7014 1600 Fax: 020 7014 1601 Email: hq@merlin.org.uk
www.merlin.org.uk

RedR

RedR builds the skills of local people and communities in areas of disaster, delivers expert training in the UK and in the field, recruits humanitarian professionals who can respond to emergencies or take longer-term placements, provides online expertise to aid workers on assignment and supports a network of members who are vital to humanitarian work.

RedR

1 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AA
Tel: 020 7233 3116 Fax: 020 7233 3590 Email: info@redr.org.uk
www.redr.org.uk

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)

VSO is an independent development charity that works through volunteers. It has almost 2,000 skilled professionals working in over 40 countries in the world, sharing skills to promote self sufficiency. Volunteers usually work as medical officers or district health officers and are placed for two years (although there are limited possibilities for shorter contracts). VSO volunteers should be between the ages of 20 and 75, have unrestricted entry rights to the UK and should have at least two years' post-registration experience. Many jobs require further specialist experience. The most useful specialties are general practice, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, trauma and surgery. VSO has secured Leave of Absence agreements with many NHS Trusts, to enable volunteers to return to the UK without experiencing employment difficulties. Other benefits include pre-departure training and support, workshops whilst overseas and support, grants and advice to help you settle back into your home country. Financially, volunteers receive a monthly allowance, accommodation, flights, insurance and VSO will maintain both your National Insurance payments and NHS pension contributions during your posting.

VSO has also set up a Fellowship Programme which is open to specialist registrars undertaking higher specialist training. Individuals can arrange 12-month placements with VSO which are accredited as part of their training. The programme is open to individuals in their third/fourth years of specialist training in paediatrics and child health, and fourth/fifth year of specialist training in obstetrics and gynaecology.

To help encourage NHS Scotland staff to volunteer with VSO, the Scottish Executive has endorsed and has provided funding to ensure continuity of existing terms and conditions of employment for up to 20 NHS Scotland employees who wish to volunteer for one to two years. This means that NHS Scotland staff will not lost out on pension or employment benefits and they get back from their placement, staff will be entitled to a position of similar grade as that to when they left.

VSO, in the wake of Sir Nigel Crisp's *Global health partnerships* report, is currently in discussions with the NHS in England to explore ways of developing a similar programme.

Voluntary Service Overseas

317 Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2PN
Tel: 020 8780 7200
www.vso.org.uk

Human rights

It has been brought to the attention of the BMA that some doctors working abroad have been asked to take part in practices which violate international standards of human rights. These include certifying that prisoners are medically fit for torture or execution. If doctors are in any doubt about the legitimacy of the work they are asked to perform, they should contact the BMA Ethics Department at ethics@bma.org.uk. They may also wish to refer to the BMA's handbook *The medical profession and human rights*.