ECFMG’s Response to Challenges in International Medical Education

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Taipei, Taiwan
June 7, 2014
ECFMG is a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that is authorized in United States (U.S.) federal regulations to serve as the certifying agency for international medical graduates (IMGs) entering the U.S. physician workforce as trainees in postgraduate medical education.
ECFMG Certification

- Assures residency program directors and the US public that the international medical graduate (IMG) has met minimum standards to enter US residency programs

- Is a prerequisite for all IMGs for:
  - Entry into ACGME-accredited GME
  - Taking USMLE Step 3
  - State licensure
  - J-1 visa sponsorship / ECFMG
Current Requirements for ECFMG Certification

- **Examination Requirements**
  
  **USMLE – U. S. Medical Licensing Examination:**
  
  - Step 1, Basic Science
    - Step 2, Clinical Knowledge (CK)
    - Step 2, Clinical Skills (CS)

- **Credentialing Requirements**
  
  - IMED listed medical school
  - Minimum four-year curriculum
  - Final medical diploma
  - Primary-source verified diploma and transcript
Initial Applicants (US- non-USIMG)

Source: ECFMG
Applicants from Caribbean Medical Schools

Source: ECFMG
USIMG=US citizen at entry to medical school

Note: The availability of exam results for some examinees taking the Step 2 CS during the initial months of test administration was delayed until early 2005. As a result, the number of certificates issued in 2004 is lower than it would have been had this delay had not occurred.
Top Countries of Citizenship, Certificates Issued (1989-2013)

Citizenship at time of entrance to medical school. Top five countries based on aggregate data over a 25-year period. Data current as of March 20, 2014.
Global Migration of Physicians

- The number of physicians coming to the USA from certain countries, mainly India, has decreased somewhat in recent years, but that decrease has been partially compensated by increased numbers of USIMGs, Canadian IMGs and others, coming mostly from the Caribbean.

- The number of IMGs emigrating to countries other than the USA appears to be increasing somewhat (based on ECFMG data from EICS and other sources).

- ECFMG is accordingly faced with two IMG populations, one coming to the USA and another going to Australia, Canada, South Africa, UK and other countries.
ECFMG is a nonprofit with a long history of granting activity

FAIMER created in 2000, by the ECFMG
• Non-profit foundation
• Separate but overlapping Directorate (N=15)
• Provided with an endowment and ongoing support
• Given responsibility for ongoing ECFMG fellowship and grant programs
Strategic Plan

“Improve the health of populations”
Strategic Plan

Improve Health Professions Education

- Faculty Development
- Data Resources
- Research
FAIMER: Faculty Development

- Initial Geographic Focus:
  - South Asia
  - Africa
  - Latin America

- Programs:
  - FAIMER Institutes
    - Philadelphia
    - Regional
  - FAIMER Education Centers
  - International Fellowships in Medical Education (IFME)
Programs: Philadelphia Institute

- Curriculum based on needs assessment
- Two-year program aimed at faculty
  - 16 Fellows per year
  - Requires a project that has institutional support
  - Mixed face-to-face and distance learning
  - Ongoing evaluation
Programs: Regional Institutes

- Training in leadership, research, management; collaboration, networking
- Run by FAIMER Fellows
- Mostly FAIMER funded
- Mumbai (’05), Ludhiana (’06), Coimbatore (’07), Brazil (’07), Southern Africa (’08), China (’13)
- Planned for 2015: FRILA (Colombia)
FAIMER Data Resources

- **IMED**: The International Medical Education Directory
  - Introduced in 2002. Free, web-based resource
  - Accurate and up-to-date source about international medical schools that are recognized by the appropriate government agency in the countries where the medical schools are located
  - Is merging with WFME’s Avicenna to form the new World Directory of Medical Schools

- **DORA**: Directory of Organizations that Recognize / Accredit undergraduate medical education programs
  - Complementary resource to IMED
IMED Lists 2,372 recognized and operating medical schools worldwide

Data current as of February 6, 2014
Health Care Challenges Impacting On International Medical Education

- Rapid increase in number – and variable quality -- of medical schools around the world
- Increase in physician mobility
  - Medical school attendance
  - GME
  - Licensure and practice
- Medical tourism
- Evolving regulatory requirements worldwide
Many countries with medical school growth rates greater than 25% since 2002:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th># old</th>
<th># new</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
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Summary of Concerns about Medical Schools

- Which are the medical schools operating around the world and where are they? Are they all legitimate?
- Are medical schools around the globe accredited and, if yes, by whom, and on the basis of what standards?
- For schools “recognized” by their country’s government, what does this recognition involve or mean?
- How are credentials of international students seeking GME and or licensure in any country validated? Are they primary source verified?
• In 1953, WHO published the first listing of the world’s medical schools

• In 2000, WHO published its final paper directory. Between 2000-2007, the WHO maintained a directory electronically incorporating some updates received after the 2000 print publication.
  • The absence of an up-to-date directory created a problem for students, schools, and regulatory bodies around the world. To address this need, FAIMER launched IMED.

• In 2007, WHO provided its electronic database to WFME, which launched its own directory, Avicenna
The AVICENNA Directories

The Avicenna Directories
Global directories of education institutions for health professions

A partnership of the World Health Organization and the University of Copenhagen

Copenhagen 2008
A new partnership between WFME and FAIMER is presently merging the Avicenna and IMED directories into one new World Directory of Medical Schools. Schools included in the directory must be recognized by the appropriate authority in their country. Additional information will be provided to meet the needs of international regulatory bodies.

Aims
- Complete coverage of institutions and countries
- Comprehensive information on each school
- Reliable and up-to-date
- Easily accessible
- Systematic data-gathering and presentation process
World Directory of Medical Schools

- Timelines
  - WDMS available in 2014
  - IMED/Avicenna will remain for a period of time

- Major Sponsors
  - Australian Medical Council
  - ECFMG
  - General Medical Council (UK)
  - Medical Council of Canada

- Other Sponsors
  - Korean Institute of Medical Education and Evaluation
  - National Board of Health, Denmark
Accreditation is a process by which a designated authority reviews and evaluates an educational institution or program against a clearly defined set of standards.

(FAIMER)
In September 2011, the ECFMG Board announced an addition (effective in twelve years – 2023) to the list of requirements for certifying an International Medical Graduate (IMG) for entry into US GME: Graduation from an accredited international medical school.

Accreditation needs to be defined, and the new ECFMG requirement includes comparability of international accrediting standards with US (LCME) standards and/or established global standards, such as those put forth by WFME.
WFME Global Standards

- Trilogy of standards for UME/GME/CME
- Basic level for accreditation and quality development
- Modified for different countries
WFME Standards

- Coverage
  - Fundamental requirements
  - Legal framework
  - Organizational structure
  - Standards and criteria
  - Process of accreditation
  - Main elements
  - Decisions on accreditation
  - Public announcement of decisions
  - Benefits of accreditation

- Main elements
  - Mission and objectives
  - Educational program
  - Assessment of students
  - Students selection, number, etc.
  - Academic staff/faculty
  - Educational resources
  - Program evaluation
  - Governance and administration
  - Continuous renewal
What Is The Usual Process For Medical School Accreditation?

- Guided self-study
- External review and site visit by a peer committee
- Accreditation decision based on self-study and visit
  - Sometimes results in a recommendation to a ministry
- Decision is disseminated
- Process is repeated periodically (e.g., 4-8 years)
Pilot Project for WFME Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

- Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP)
- Under the auspices of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
  - Political affiliation of 15 member countries
  - Includes most English speaking Caribbean islands and a small number of Central and South American nations
- Established in 2004
- Headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica
  - 32 medical schools under CAAM-HP jurisdiction
Accreditation is based on LCME model
- Functions independently of governments and institutions
- Voluntary

Standards
- Institutional Setting / Students / Education Programs / Faculty / Educational Resources / Internships

Procedures
- Self-evaluation by school (completion of database) / Evaluation of database and supporting documents / Site visit / Creation of final report / CAAM-HP decision

Information
- www.caam-hp.org
Documents Developed for WFME Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

- **Procedures for Recognition of an Accrediting Agency**
  - Describes responsibilities and composition of WFME recognition committee, policies and procedures, appeals, etc.

- **Criteria for Recognition of an Accrediting Agency**
  - Describes the standards used by WFME to evaluate an accrediting agency

- **Application for Recognition of an Accrediting Agency**
  - “Self-study” template to be completed by accrediting agency seeking WFME recognition
A Global Medical School Accreditation Mechanism

- WFME reviews and “recognizes” Regional or National Accrediting Agencies through an international collaborative process for compliance with its standards

  • Pilot: CAAM-HP was evaluated by WFME in 2011 and recognized in 2012
  • LCME and CACMS evaluated in 2013

- Regional or National Agencies accredit individual schools

- Accreditation of an international medical school by an agency recognized by WFME, will meet the new ECFMG requirement for certification (USA)
Accreditation:
Accomplishments and needs

- Many accomplishments in the past four years:
  - The New World Directory of Medical Schools (WDMS)—a partnership of WFME and FAIMER
  - WFME plans for strengthening the Recognition Program
  - Ongoing research by FAIMER on the impact of Accreditation

- What is still needed:
  - Effective national or regional accreditation programs that can be recognized by WFME worldwide
  - A solid infrastructure for WFME’s recognition program
  - Research validating the benefits of Accreditation
Summary of Additional Concerns from Multiple Sources

- What guidance/support is available for students/physicians seeking training and professional opportunities in the USA?
- As students seek training opportunities around the world, how can they become familiar with what is available internationally?
- How are GME programs around the world evaluated? Is there a mechanism for international GME accreditation?
- How are credentials of international students seeking GME and or licensure in any country validated? Are they primary source verified?
- Are there mechanisms for international specialty training certification?
Quality

- Very difficult to define globally, but easier to define in specific areas, e.g. in health care:
  - Quality is “the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge”


  - Ideally, education methods and quality assurance standards should be correlated with clinical outcomes

  (e.g., Norcini, J. and colleagues, Evaluating the Quality of Care Provided by Graduates of International Medical Schools, Health Affairs, No. 8 (2010): 1401-1468)
Regulation of Health Care: Quality Standards

- Awarding of Degrees (by training institution)
- Licensure (by responsible jurisdiction)
- Accreditation (for institutions/programs)
- Certification (for individuals)
- Scope of Practice (for professions)
- Credentialing and Privileging (for individuals)
Regulation: Accreditation of Institutions and Programs

- Largely at the national level

- International accreditation standards have been developed and are being applied to both Institutions and Programs:
  - Healthcare Organizations (JCAHCO-I)
  - Medical Schools (WFME recognition of Accreditors)
  - GME programs (ACGME-I)
Certification

- **Certification** refers to:
  - the act of making something official
  - the act of certifying something
  - official approval to do something professionally or legally

(Merriam-Webster)
Certification

- Certification of IMGs by ECFMG in the US
- Certification of specialists by Specialty Boards
  - A voluntary process in the United States.
  - Medical licensure sets the minimum competency requirements to diagnose and treat patients, it is not specialty specific.
  - Board certification demonstrates a physician’s exceptional expertise in a particular specialty and/or subspecialty.
    (From the ABMS Website)

- Evolution of Specialty Certification in the US
  - Originally, a once-in-a-lifetime event
  - Recertification (e.g. at 10 year intervals) now required by most Boards
  - Maintenance of certification (self-assessment, practice-evaluation, re-testing) under active consideration
Regulation: Certification and Licensure of Practitioners

- By the Profession or by the Government

- Certification/Licensure of individuals largely at the national level
  - Registration/Licensure Of Practitioners
    - From Lifelong Registration to Licensure in the UK
    - Maintenance of Licensure in the USA
  - Certification of Specialists
    - Maintenance of Certification in the USA
Key Requirements for International Medical Education

- Global medical education standards
- A World Directory of Medical Schools
- An international accreditation system for medical schools
- An international credentialing system that ensures primary source credentials verification
- A medical student exchange system
- An international GME accreditation system
- Harmonized certification and licensure standards
ECFMG Initiatives in Response to Remaining Identified Concerns

- For IMGs coming to the US:
  - ECFMG’s Certificate Holders’ Office (ECHO)

- For IMGs NOT coming to the US:
  - ECFMG’s GEMx Program
  - ECFMG’s Primary Source Credentials Verification Programs:
    - ECFMG International Credentials Service (EICS)
    - Electronic Portfolio of International Credentials (EPIC)
How is EFMG assisting IMGs coming to the USA?

Be connected. Be heard. Be informed.
ECHO: ECFMG Certificate Holders’ Office

- Provides information and services to ECFMG-certified physicians and those nearing certification as they plan their careers
- Helps ECFMG-certified physicians stay connected with ECFMG and access its resources
- Provides ongoing communication with ECFMG through survey and feedback pages
ECFMG’s Global Education in Medicine Exchange (GEMx)

- ECFMG will utilize its extensive relationships with medical schools, physicians, regulatory agencies, health care organizations, and other entities to understand challenges, innovate solutions, and ensure that GEMx meets the real-world needs of the medical schools and students engaging in global exchanges.

- GEMx will facilitate and promote international exchanges in medical education, providing medical schools and students with access to the two most essential components of effective exchange programs: information and community.
ECFMG: Program Sponsor for All J-1 Physicians in Clinical Training

- ECFMG sponsored J-1 ("alien physician") category
- Temporary, non-immigrant visa
- Full-time educational training (GME program) --not employment
- Two-year home residency obligation
- Seven-year maximum for progressive training
Credentialing

• “The systematic process of screening and evaluating qualifications and other relevant evidence—such as licensure, education, training, and clinical experience—to ensure that specific requirements are met.”
  
  (IOM, PMHSUT, 2010)

• “Regular verification of the credentials of health care practitioners and definition of their privileges are required [by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), and the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC)] for increased patient safety, reduction of medical errors and the provision of high quality health care services.”

  (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia)
Established in 2000 to assist international medical regulatory authorities in evaluating credentials of applicants’ education within their jurisdiction

Offers primary-source verification of authenticity of:

- Medical diplomas and transcripts
- Certificates of postgraduate education and training
- Certificates of registration and licensure
- Extensive Credentials Reference Library:
  - Sample medical diplomas and other credentials over time
  - Names, titles, and sample signatures of authorized medical school officials
  - Authentic medical school seals over time
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ECFMG International Credentials Services (EICS)

Credentials Primary-Source Verified by EICS in 2012, by Document Type

- **Medical School Diploma**: 9084 (43%)
- **Medical School Transcript**: 4231 (19%)
- **Certificate of Postgraduate Medical Training**: 6476 (27%)
- **Certificate of Licensure**: 2188 (10%)

Current Clients

- **Australia** – Australian Medical Council
- **Canada** – Medical Council of Canada and Physicians Credentials Registry of Canada
- **Namibia** – Medical and Dental Board of Namibia
- **Norway** – Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel
- **South Africa** – Health Professions Council of South Africa
Electronic Repository of International Credentials (EPIC)

- Primary-source verification – a “best practice”--utilizes ECFMG’s recognized expertise in verifying medical credentials
- Provides individual physicians with a secure repository of primary-source verified medical credentials
- On-line service with 24/7 access
- Reports of verified medical credentials sent to medical regulatory authorities and other organizations
- Launched in April 2013
## FAIMER-Keele Credentials

### Certificate
- Student Assessment (15 Hrs)
- Accreditation/Self-Review (15 Hrs)

### Diploma
- Assessment & accreditation (10 Hrs)
- Research design (10 Hrs)
- Curriculum design & evaluation (10 Hrs)
- Teaching and learning (10 Hrs)

### Masters
- Leadership & management (10 Hrs)
- Residential component (1 Week)
- Thesis
Key Requirements for International Medical Education

- Global Medical Education Standards (WFME)
- A World Directory of Medical Schools (FAIMER & WFME)
- An International Accreditation System for Medical Schools (ECFMG and WFME)
- A System Providing Primary Source Verification of Medical Credentials (EICS and EPIC)
- An International GME Accreditation System (ACGME-I)
  - In Singapore and countries in the Middle East
- Harmonized certification and licensure standards (IAMRA)
THANK YOU!

Questions?

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