



Communiqué

Medical Board of Australia meeting: 16 November 2011

The Medical Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory.

As part of its governance structure, the Medical Board has established state and territory boards and state-based committees to whom it has delegated all the necessary powers under the National Law to deal with registration and notifications matters about practitioners. If a practitioner appeals a decision of a state or territory board, that appeal is heard in the jurisdiction's external tribunal and is not considered by the National Board. The National Board develops, consults on and approves registration standards, codes and guidelines.

At this month's meeting, the Board considered feedback about a registration standard for granting general registration on completion of the intern year and on a guideline on technology-based consultations.

Further consultation on a registration standard for granting general registration on completion of the intern year

The Board has previously developed and consulted on a draft registration standard for granting general registration to Australian and New Zealand graduates after they complete their intern year. A great deal of valuable feedback was received on the draft. Submissions will be published on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au.

There was general support for the draft registration standard. Respondents recognised there was a need for increased flexibility of intern training while maintaining standards. There was clear interest in the Board providing more information to support the intern year, however this would be in addition to a registration standard. The Board has agreed to develop additional information, which will include learning objectives, assessment instruments and a framework for intern accreditation.

The aim of the registration standard is to define the basic requirements of an approved intern year for granting general registration. It also aims to provide interns (provisional registrants) with a degree of certainty that they will be granted general registration if they meet the requirements of the National Law, any relevant registration standards, and if they perform satisfactorily.

The draft registration standard moved away from "emergency medicine" and required a term in emergency medical care. This reflected that interns can be exposed to emergency medicine in a range of settings, including some select general practices. Junior doctor strongly advocated for the value of the term in emergency medicine.

The Board has revised the registration standard and developed a supporting paper that addresses many issues identified by stakeholders. The Board will be consulting on the revised registration standard.

Technology based consultations

The Board previously developed and consulted on draft guidelines for technology based consultations. Feedback has been published on the Board's website.

Technology based patient consultations are defined in the guidelines. They are patient consultations that use any form of technology, including, but not restricted to videoconferencing, internet and telephone, as an alternative to face to face consultations.

The Board confirmed that medical practitioners who use any form of technology based consultations must adhere to the principles contained in the Board's Code of Conduct *Good medical practice – a code of conduct for medical practitioners*.

The Board has considered all submissions received and it will be finalising and publishing the guidelines shortly.

Definition of 'practice'

The Medical Board and six other health practitioner Boards are currently consulting on the definition of 'practice'. A discussion paper has been prepared and is available on the Board's website at www.medicalboard.gov.au under 'News & Updates'. Submissions received to date for all the professions are published on the website of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) at www.ahpra.gov.au.

The current definition of 'practice' as defined in a number of the Board's registration standards is:

***Practice** means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a health practitioner in their profession. For the purposes of this registration standard, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct non-clinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.*

This definition is broad and covers a range of activities that fall outside of the traditional direct doctor-patient relationship. The Board has received feedback that this broad definition has caused difficulties for practitioners who do not believe that they should have to be registered (and therefore comply with the Board's registration standards), when their work activities do not involve patient care. The Board understands that the current definition of practice has impacted on practitioners who wish to teach undergraduate or postgraduate students and on practitioners who assess medical students or medical practitioners.

The Board welcomes feedback from stakeholders, including the medical profession. Submissions close on 2 December 2011.

Referrals from coroners

From time to time, a state coroner may refer a finding of an inquest to AHPRA or the Board, to draw to the attention of the profession.

AHPRA will publish a case summary of each referral from the coroner on its website, naming the deceased person, with the coroner's recommendations in full. A link will also be provided to the coroner's website.

Medical practitioners are encouraged to access the AHPRA website at www.ahpra.gov.au to keep up to date with these cases and coroners' recommendations.

When the Board decides that a referral from the coroner has wide reaching implications for medical practitioners, it may publish a summary of the case, and highlight particular issues in the Medical Board Update.

The next edition of the Update will be distributed to all registered medical practitioners in December 2011.

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Chair, Medical Board of Australia

28 November 2011