



Communiqué

Medical Board of Australia meeting: 14 November 2012

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

2012 Annual Report

AHPRA and the National Boards have released their 2012 Annual Report. The 2012 Annual Report details the work of the National Boards and AHPRA in implementing the second year of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The release was supported by the publication of a special edition of the AHPRA Report. The 2012 Annual Report and the AHPRA report are both available online at: www.ahpra.gov.au. The 2012 Annual Report is under 'Legislation and Publications' and the AHPRA report is under 'News'.

The Board also publishes [quarterly registration data](#) on the website, profiling Australia's medical profession and to a large extent, our medical workforce. These data include detail on practitioners' registration type, specialty, age, gender and geographic distribution.

External health programs

The former Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, together with the Australian Medical Association Victoria, established the Victorian Doctors Health Program (VDHP) in 2001. The VDHP is a confidential service for doctors and medical students who have health concerns such as stress, mental health problems, substance use problems, or any other health issues. It was funded by the previous Victorian Board with funds raised through medical practitioners' registration fees.

The VDHP continues to be funded from money that was committed by the previous Victorian Minister for Health from reserves of the Victorian Board, before the transition to the National Scheme. Funding has been committed until 30 June 2013.

In late 2011, the Board received correspondence from the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) about the VDHP and more generally, externally run but Board funded health programs for medical practitioners. The Ministerial Council asked the Board to consider the continuation of the VDHP and its expansion nationally, or to other states, territories or regions. In response, the Board developed a discussion paper on this issue and sought feedback from stakeholders.

Feedback from the consultation on external health programs found general support for the idea of external health programs, to complement the Board's core focus on managing impaired practitioners who may pose a serious risk to public safety. However, there was no consensus on the funding for such external health programs and very limited support for an increase in practitioners' registration fees to enable them.

The Board continues to develop its position on future funding for external doctors' health programs. It continues to explore options in relation to external health programs, while remaining focused on managing impaired practitioners to protect public safety. As an interim measure, the Board has

agreed to extend short-term funding of \$350,000 to the VDHP for the 2013/14 financial year, while the Board determines a policy position.

The Board has not decided on the amount of funds, nor the range of services that it would fund into the future in establishing an equitable approach to external health services nationally. The Board is examining funding models for external health programs in the context of 2013 budget planning.

Starting the revalidation conversation in Australia

Internationally in medicine and medical regulation, there is active discussion about revalidation for medical practitioners and how it can support patient safety. The International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA), defines revalidation as "...the process by which doctors have to regularly show that they are up to date, and fit to practise medicine. This will mean that they are able to keep their license to practise. Sometimes called 'Recertification.' "

The Board has decided to formally begin this conversation in Australia. It has not yet made any decisions or set a strategic course. It is committed to working with the profession, the community and other stakeholders about its approach, which will be informed through careful analysis of Australian data, our regulatory context and international research.

The Board expects to develop an initial discussion paper in 2013 and to consult widely with all interested stakeholders as the conversation about revalidation develops.

Consultation on a proposed intern training framework

At the request of the Board, the Australian Medical Council (AMC) has undertaken work to complement and support the proposed registration standard for granting general registration to Australian and New Zealand medical graduates on completion of the intern year. The proposed registration standard has been submitted to the Ministerial Council for approval.

The AMC has developed draft documents on:

1. A set of **global outcomes statements** for the intern year that draws on the Australian Curriculum Framework for Junior Doctors and AMC graduate outcome statements for primary medical education
2. **A national framework for intern training accreditation process** that harmonises different approaches to intern training accreditation across the country. This is necessary if we are to achieve greater national consistency, assure training standards nationally and provide an equitable basis for allocation of Board funds which support this accreditation process.

This framework includes:

- **National standards for intern training** that build on existing state-based guidelines and standards
 - **Guidelines on the experience** that interns should obtain during medicine, surgery and emergency medical care terms (terms all interns must complete)
 - **A quality framework for intern training accreditation**, which provides domains for assessment of intern training accreditation bodies in their intern training accreditation roles and a proposed process for assessment of their performance of these roles
 - An outline of the roles and responsibilities in the framework.
3. A process for **assessment and certification of interns** as having met the requirements for granting general registration in the national registration and accreditation scheme. The aim is for an efficient and cost effective national framework for assessment.

The AMC is currently consulting on these draft documents. They are available on the AMC website at www.amc.org.au. The consultation closes on **17 December 2012**. Stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to the consultation process.

Accreditation standards for programs of study that lead to an endorsement for acupuncture

The National Law provides for the endorsement of registration for acupuncture for all registered health practitioners, including medical practitioners. It is a breach of the National Law for a person to take or use the title “acupuncturist” if that person is not registered by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia or if their registration has not been endorsed by one of the National Health Practitioner Boards.

The Board has developed a registration standard for *Endorsement of registration for acupuncture for registered medical practitioners*. The registration standard has been submitted to the Ministerial Council for approval.

One of the proposed pathways for medical practitioners to be granted endorsement of registration for acupuncture is by holding an ‘approved qualification’. At the present time, the approved qualifications for endorsement of medical registration for acupuncture are:

1. The Graduate Certificate in Medical Acupuncture (Monash University) or
2. The Australian Medical Acupuncture College course (AMAC) - AMAC-QLD and AMAC-NSW combined course

These are approved qualifications by virtue of the transitional arrangements in the National Law.

Eligible practitioners (with either qualification above) will also be required to successfully complete the Fellowship of the Australian Medical Acupuncture College (FAMAC) Part 1 written and clinical examinations.

The Board has asked the AMC to develop accreditation standards that enable the accreditation of programs of study in acupuncture that lead to an approved qualification for endorsement for acupuncture of medical practitioners. The AMC has now developed draft standards that set broad objectives for training medical practitioners for acupuncture and outline the educational processes and systems that will ensure the programs of study produce graduates capable of carrying out acupuncture treatment for appropriate indications in a safe and effective manner.

The AMC will consult widely about the draft accreditation standards for endorsement of medical registration. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback. The accreditation standards will be published on the AMC’s website at www.amc.org.au.

Accreditation of the University of Notre Dame Australia, School of Medicine, Fremantle

One of the objectives of the National Law is to facilitate the provision of high quality education and training of health practitioners. The accreditation function is the primary way of achieving this. The National Law defines the respective roles of the Board and its appointed accreditation authority, the AMC, in the accreditation of medical schools and medical specialist colleges and in the development and approval of registration standards.

Accreditation of medical schools and specialist colleges

The AMC is responsible for accrediting individual programs of study after it is reasonably satisfied that:

1. the program of study meets an accreditation standard or
2. substantially meets an approved accreditation standard and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time frame.

The AMC can also refuse to accredit a program of study. The AMC must give the Board a report after it decides to accredit a program of study (with or without conditions).

After being given an accreditation report, the Board may approve, or refuse to approve, the accredited program of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration. An approval may be granted subject to conditions.

The Board approved the Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degree from the **University of Notre Dame Australia, School of Medicine Fremantle**, as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration in the medical profession. Approval of the qualification is until 31 December 2016.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM

Chair, Medical Board of Australia

26 November 2012