



Saskatoon Open Door Society  
Employment Services



## GUIDE TO RE-LICENSING AS A PHYSICIAN IN SASKATCHEWAN

Despite the shortage of doctors in many parts of Saskatchewan and Canada, it is not easy for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to become licensed in Canada. It is not impossible, however, and there is progress being made in Saskatchewan and across the country to make licensure more accessible. If you choose your strategies carefully, are persistent, energetic and imaginative, you do have a reasonable chance of success. About half the doctors practicing in Saskatchewan are foreign-trained!

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) does not recognize the training or licensing of physicians from countries outside the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa or Canada. Please note that this situation may also pertain to some American and British medical schools that operate internationally, especially in the Caribbean. The information that follows is for International Medical Graduates whose medical training and licensing is not recognized by relevant Canadian or provincial licensing bodies.

The process to become licensed is time consuming and complex. This guide has been developed to try to give IMGs an idea of the path that they need to take to become licensed. This information is general and up to date as of June 2006. Your path currently may involve the following:

- proving competency in English with a suitable Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score,
- passing evaluating and qualifying exams,
- qualifying for a residency position,
- possibly going through an assessment program, though there currently is not an assessment program in Saskatchewan.

There is help for you along the way. The following are institutions and organizations that will be able to help you in your process and give you the most up to date information. The **Saskatoon Open Door Society Employment Services** provides employment counselling to Immigrant Job Seekers, and can help you through the process of becoming licensed. It is advisable that you register with Employment Services. The **Saskatchewan International Medical Graduates Association (SIMGA)** is an IMG run organization and is working with government, licensing bodies and educational institutions to develop a clearer path for IMGs. Membership in SIMGA is recommended as a way to get support in the process and to keep up to date on the changes that are happening.

*The Saskatoon Open Door Society exists to welcome and assist refugees and immigrants to become informed and effective participants in Canadian society and to involve the Saskatoon community in their hospitable reception and just acceptance*

**Saskatoon Open Door Society**

Employment Services  
247 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1X2  
(306) 653-4464  
[www.sods.sk.ca](http://www.sods.sk.ca)

**Saskatchewan International Medical Graduates Association (SIMGA)**

c/o Saskatoon Open Door Society  
247 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1X2  
President, Dr. Lado Kenyi, [aladokenyi@yahoo.ca](mailto:aladokenyi@yahoo.ca)

**College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS)**

211 Fourth Avenue South  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1N1  
(306) 244-7355  
<http://www.quadrant.net/cps/index.html>

**College of Medicine**

**University of Saskatchewan**  
107 Wiggins Road, Saskatoon SK S7N 5E5  
Phone: (306) 966-6135 / Fax: (306) 966-6164  
<http://www.usask.ca/medicine/>

**Medical Council of Canada**

PO Box 8234, Station "T"  
Ottawa ON K1G 3H7  
MCC Website: [www.mcc.ca](http://www.mcc.ca)

**Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons**

774 Echo Drive  
Ottawa ON K1S 5N8  
(613)730-8177, Toll free at 1-800-668-3740

## **Getting Started**

### **1. English Language Proficiency**

It takes time to go through the process of becoming a doctor. There are applications to fill out, fees to be paid and exams to be studied for and taken. You should begin this process as soon as you can. However, being proficient in English is also extremely important, and

a lack of English proficiency may prevent you from practicing, no matter how good of a doctor you are.

Permanent Residents of Canada are eligible for free English classes through the **Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)** program. Regardless of your competency in English, it is advisable to go to the local **Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)** office to arrange a language assessment. Even if your language ability is too advanced for LINC classes, your **Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB)** assessment can provide you with information that can lead to other training opportunities, such as the **Enhanced Language Training (ELT)** program, or help you determine if you are ready to take the **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)**. You will likely have to pass the TOEFL if your language of training was other than English. The test itself is available through the Sylvan Learning Institute and other venues for about \$160. A fairly high score (250 on the old system) is required.

For a fee, the **University of Saskatchewan Language Centre** offers day and evening general English classes, as well as specialized evening classes on topics such as writing, TOEFL preparation and pronunciation.

Finally, the **Saskatoon Business College** is a private school whose course on medical Terminology has a good reputation with the University's Nursing program.

## **2. The Medical Council of Canada**

If you have

- completed your medical education and training at a World Health Organization recognized Medical School,
- completed all of your internship training rotations,
- possess a degree or diploma as a Medical Doctor (or Physician and Surgeon),
- been licenced or were fully eligible for licensing in your country of origin,
- not been restricted or disciplined for cause,

then you are eligible to have your courses and credentials evaluated and verified by the Medical Council of Canada and, if they are accepted, to be a candidate for the MCCEE (the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination). This exam is necessary for you to become licensed.

If you were a **General Practitioner** or a **Family Doctor**, contact the:

Medical Council of Canada  
Attention: Qualifying Examination Part I Attention: Qualifying Examination Pt. I  
PO Box 8234, Station "T"  
Ottawa ON K1G 3H7  
***For Courier Delivery only:***  
Medical Council of Canada  
100 - 2283 St. Laurent Blvd

Ottawa ON K1G 5A2  
Telephone: (613) 521-6012  
Fax: (613) 521-9417

If you were a **specialist** in an area other than Family Medicine in your country of origin, then you should get in touch with the:

**Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons**  
774 Echo Drive  
Ottawa ON K1S 5N8 Canada  
(613)730-8177, Toll free at 1-800-668-3740

While you may be required to go through a similar initial assessment and examination process, this body assesses, examines and recommends the licensing of specialists. It is therefore advisable to contact them immediately as you start on the process.

Please refer to the MCC's large and comprehensive website and documents for the latest information on application deadlines, regulations, examination dates, costs and other particulars and check it regularly. Information published by the MCC supersedes any of the general simplified summary information, comments, and recommendations that follow.

### **First Step: Recognition of your Training**

1. You must send a payment of around \$1000 to the **Medical Council of Canada**. About \$200.00 is for the assessment and \$800.00 is for the exam. You must also provide:
  - a. Proof of your identity and your immigration status,
  - b. Your medical school transcripts,
  - c. Your medical school degree,
  - d. Proof that you completed your rotations,
  - e. Reference persons for your medical school/training hospital complete with
    - i. Contact information
    - ii. Authorization to release your information to the Medical Council of Canada
- a. Your assessment may not be successful if:
  - i. There is a lack of adequate documentation (in some cases and situations affidavits will be considered in place of missing documents)
  - ii. Your training is not considered acceptable. In this case, you will first be contacted to see if the situation can be corrected. In the experience of Saskatoon Open Door Society clients, it is rare that training has not been considered acceptable.

If your assessment is not successful, the balance of the \$1000.00 will be returned to you.

- b. If the assessment is successful, then you will be provided with a candidate number and a choice of examination dates to write the (MCCEE), for which you have already paid in your initial fee.

**NOTE:** A strict new set of guidelines for “**Source verification**” to authenticate **Final Medical Diplomas** came into effect in November 2005. This means that “**ALL IMG’s who passed the MCCEE prior to 2004 will have to have such verification in progress in order to be admitted to write the MCCQE Part I and that such verification must be completed for acceptance to the QE Part II and for issuance of the LMCC.**”

Please refer to: [http://www.mcc.ca/english/news/PolicyChanges\\_e.html](http://www.mcc.ca/english/news/PolicyChanges_e.html) for further details on the specific documents and fees required.

### **Second Step: the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination (MCCEE)**

Examination results, by themselves, count for little, but in order to move forward in the process, you must pass the MCCEE as a first step. This test is also available internationally, and can be done before you arrive in Canada. It is a seven hour examination that can still be done as a written exam but is usually done on a computer.

Problems with language, terminology or a clear understanding of what is being asked often cause or contribute to failure. Be sure to:

1. Allow yourself enough time to prepare,
2. Gain access to such study materials as Toronto Notes,
3. Study past exams and talk to people who have taken the examination recently,
4. Join a study group. Members of SIMGA often organize study groups,
5. Attend relevant Seminars, Lectures and Colloquiums, if possible. SIMGA will have information on events at the College of Medicine on their website.

If you do not pass the MCCEE on your first attempt, do not be discouraged, especially if you only failed in one or two sections. Capable people often fail because of problems understanding questions because of language problems and also because they do not yet understand Canadian cultural and professional expectations about doctors and the doctor – patient relationship.

The MCC is aware of this, and will provide you with an application to write a re-test at a somewhat reduced cost. Make sure that you give yourself enough time to study and also carefully analyze, research and discuss any particular problems that you can identify. This is something for which study partners and group study have proved invaluable.

### **Third Step: the MCC Qualifying Exam, Part One (LMCC-Part 1)**

If you pass the MCCEE, you will be invited to apply for this second examination. It is true that you will likely have to pass the LMCC Part 1 or “Q1” to really be in contention for most programs and residencies.

This \$680 seven-and-one half hour examination that can only be done on computer and is similar to the MCCEE, but some who pass the MCCEE and immediately register for this examination end up having to write it again. Talk to others who have taken this examination, obtain paper and on-line copies of past examinations and of practice examinations, give yourself time to prepare, and participate in a study group.

### **Fourth Step: the MCC Qualifying Exam, Part Two (LMCC-Part 1I)**

The LMMCC Part 2 or Q2 examination is a comprehensive clinical examination which requires you to have passed the LMCC Part1 and costs over \$1500. As well as requiring comprehensive diagnostic knowledge, it also demands that you understand Canadian cultural and professional expectations about the doctor – patient relationship. The successful diagnosis and interaction with a number of “patients” is closely watched and carefully evaluated.

This is an expensive, intensive, multi-day examination process for which it is important to prepare carefully, and with all the support from study-partners and others that you can possibly organize. Candidates have found participation in Rounds and Grand Rounds, Observerships, and any possibly clinical contact with patients to be especially helpful in preparing for this examination. Also, it is essential to keep as current as possible by attending any possible lectures, seminars and others discussions. Again, SIMGA is working with the College of Medicine to assist its members to gain access to educational opportunities at the College.

## **3. Licensing**

Although examinations are national, and the successful completion of these will provide you with the LMCC, actual licensing to practice is provincial, through each province’s College of Physicians and Surgeons, and there are considerable variations from province to province. There are essentially two roads to gaining a licence to practice in a Canadian province, and the road you take will also determine the kind of licence granted.

### **1. Residency:**

The best course if you have little, no, or very dated experience practicing medicine is to study for exams, observe and audit any possible courses and lectures, and gain acceptance into a residency. These vary in length from two years for Family Medicine, to four years for Internal Medicine, to five years for such specialties as Psychiatry.

**a) The Canadian Resident Matching Process CARMS Process:**

( <http://www.carms.ca> )

The CARMS process of matching medical graduates to residency positions takes place at the end of February and in March of each year. IMG's are only allowed to apply for the second round of this process, resulting in a success rate of between 8% and 12% for IMG applicants in any given year. The cost is around \$300 with a further \$20 fee for every position applied for, beyond an initial four.

**b) Sponsorship by a Community:**

It has been reported that it is sometimes possible to find a community, usually rural, and especially Northern and remote, to sponsor the costs of your two year residency as a General Practitioner. This requires that you have passed your MCCEE and usually your MCCQ-1 (LMCC-1), have your ACLS and that you formally contract to stay in and serve that community for a further period of the same length as the residency. It is important that any physician interested in such a residency:

1. Carefully investigate licencing requirements and restrictions with the CPSS,
2. Visit and spend enough time in the community to ensure that it is livable for them.

**c) Special Residency Programs for IMGs:**

The Department of Health and the College of Medicine have had two intakes of IMG residencies in 2005 and 2006, and there is every indication that there will be up to five residencies available each year for IMGs. The criteria and Province of Saskatchewan Residency requirements have varied between the intakes. The application process will probably begin in the fall of each year. Keep an eye on the College of Medicine website for information on the residency programs and how to apply.

**2. Assessment Programs:**

The ideal course for IMG's with considerable medical experience, especially if this experience is recent, is to win a place in a Canadian medical assessment program. Eligibility for admission to such programs always requires the completion of the MCCEE credential evaluation and examination, and the completion of the Q-1 is preferred. There are usually also similar English proficiency and ACLS requirements similar to those required for residencies, although there is sometimes a little flexibility in these areas. This approval and examination has often consisted of a combination of written and clinical examinations similar to the MCCQ-1 and Q-2 (LMCC Part 1 and 2).

Saskatchewan presently lacks assessment mechanisms, but has sometimes used space in assessment programs in another province or co-operated in a national project. Usually, sponsorship by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan is required to use one of the out-of-province assessment programs. Unfortunately, the CPSS appears to lack confidence in these program and is waiting for an evaluation of the assessment programs nationally, due in the Fall of 2006, before it considers participation in future assessment programs.

Many other provinces have some sort of assessment capacity, and it may be worthwhile to explore on the internet some of those programs. Information on the CAPE assessment process in Manitoba can be found at the following website:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mlpimg/mlpimg06.pdf>.

Information about a recent multi-province assessment process can be found at <http://www.waaip.ca>.

Any residency or assessment program will likely demand that you have up-to-date **Advanced Cardiac Life Support** training and certification (in case you end up being the lucky “doctor in the house” in an emergency!). This several day course if is available through the College of Medicine for about \$350.

#### **4. Not Just Exam Scores: Getting Yourself Known**

Both residency programs and assessment processes require sponsorship or the personal support of doctors and health professionals already in the system. It is essential to get yourself known!

Ways of doing so include:

- a. Registering with the College of Medicine for an Observership. This costs about \$50, and requires you to have passed at least your MCCEE,
- b. Finding a local doctor or clinic who will allow you to observe,
- c. Gaining permission to participate in hospital rounds for a particular specialty (or, in some cases, Academic Rounds).

**Note: Please remember that you will have no medical status in this situation, and begin by simply listening and watching. As people get to know you, they may eventually ask you to participate. Start with polite, respectful questions that, nevertheless, show that you understand what is going on. But always be ready for the pleasant surprise of eventually having a question addressed to you!**

Again, SIMGA is working on arrangements to assist IMGs to get out into the medical community. Keeping in touch with SIMGA is very beneficial to your path to becoming licensed.

### **CONCLUSION**

As stated earlier, it is a long, difficult process for IMGs to become practicing physicians in Saskatchewan. However, there are people who have gone through the process in Saskatchewan and succeeded. It takes a lot of work and the support of agencies like the Open Door Society, organizations like SIMGA and helpful health professionals already practicing. It is hoped that this document provides a bit of an idea on how to get where you want to go, but it does not replace each individual’s need to prepare thoroughly and stay connected. What is outlined here is the outline of the process, but keep informed because new programs and policy changes at the government level are occurring often.