

Accreditation Information Sheet

Residency accreditation for the 21st century

Background

Within residency education, accreditation is a quality improvement process to ensure adherence to national standards across all programs and universities – graduating medical doctors ready to enter practice with the competencies to deliver excellence in care delivery.

In 2012 focus groups and interviews were conducted with postgraduate deans and other stakeholders regarding the need for reform of the current accreditation system, as part of a Royal College/CFPC Conjoint Accreditation Task Force. The final report highlighted that the majority of those interviewed believed that a significant, major transformation of the current system was required. While some areas of the current system were identified as strengths, such as its systematic rigorous process and peer review, there were a number of important areas in which significant challenges with the current system were identified. Some of these challenges include:

- Lack of emphasis on quality program outcomes;
- Inappropriate categories of accreditation;
- Resident input is not always optimized;
- Time-consuming, paper-based process;
- Overemphasis on accreditation as a high stakes, at times punitive, “snap-shot in time” site visit; and
- Idiosyncratic decision-making

Working Towards a New System

Recognizing the opportunity to improve the system, and responding to calls for transformation, in 2013, the three colleges began collaborative work towards a future conjoint accreditation system for Canadian residency education. These efforts included creating a number of working groups and committees which have been working to advance new standards and process development. These working groups and committees dedicated to reforming the residency accreditation system include representation from postgraduate deans, deans and assistant deans; program directors; program administrators; residents; surveyors; Royal College specialty committee chairs; Accreditation Committee members; the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FMRAC); and staff from all three colleges.

Most recently, together with input from various postgraduate stakeholders, the three college partnership, now entitled the Canadian Residency Accreditation Consortium (CanRAC), has developed a framework for a new conjoint accreditation system for Canadian residency education. The new system components, recently endorsed in principle by the Accreditation Committees of the three colleges, aim to align residency accreditation with 21st century best practices in accreditation while also supporting the shift towards competency-based medical education (CBME)

through both the Royal College's Competence by Design (CBD) initiative and the CFPC's Triple 'C' Curriculum. The system components include:

1. A new framework of standards for residency programs, with an emphasis on high-yield markers and program outcomes;
2. A new institutional review process, standard system, and status category;
3. A renewed emphasis on the quality and safety of learning environments;
4. Introduction of a digital Accreditation Management System that makes the accreditation process more efficient;
5. A new eight year cycle of regular accreditation visits, supported by continuous data monitoring;
6. Increased emphasis on self-evaluation and continuous quality improvement;
7. Enhanced onsite review processes, such as tracer methods;
8. New decision categories, with thresholds to improve consistency of decision-making;
9. A new category of "exemplary" ratings to identify programs who have developed outstanding innovations;
10. A systematic approach to evaluation, research, and continuous improvement of the system.

Gradual and Iterative Implementation

An implementation plan has been developed by the CanRAC, in collaboration and discussion with the three colleges' respective Accreditation Committees, which aims to ensure that there is **adequate time for all institutions and programs review, understand, and prepare, before being expected to demonstrate compliance with the new standards or process components**. The three colleges understand that transitioning to a new accreditation system is complex, and commit to continuously providing all schools and programs with the information they need to prepare. The CanRAC also commit to continuously reviewing implementation plan & timelines to ensure they remain appropriate.