



10.01.12

Dear Clare,

Thank you for your letter dated the 28th of December and I am glad that our dialogue is continuing in an effort to resolve the very concerning issues at hand which have put the careers of several GP trainees in jeopardy.

We have grave concerns regarding the validity of the CSA as an exam particularly for International Medical Graduates who do well in their training to reach the 'exit' stage but seem to need multiple attempts to pass this final hurdle or worse are unable to do so and are left with bleak career prospects. These doctors have had extensive interaction over a period of many years with their trainers and patients without significant concerns. For them to be judged to be so grossly incompetent in a short exit exam either reflects poorly on years of training (unlikely), or as we believe the poor quality of the exit exam.

A key part of BAPIO's vision is 'Striving for Professional Excellence' and we do not at any time want a compromise on professional standards. The demands on General Practice are high and all GPs must be trained to high standards. However, as previously stated, the CSA is at odds with evaluation of training over the years and this is the reason why we would request the College considers reverting to a process for evaluating trainees that does not involve the CSA in its present format. In our view there should be an alternative way for trainees to demonstrate their interaction with patients and evaluation of video encounters with real patients, as opposed to actors who we believe are poorly and wrongly trained, should be given serious consideration. This is a valid way of assessing patient encounters and is not only widely used around the world, but also by the RCGP itself in the recent past. We do not have faith in the CSA in the current format and cannot support its continuing use.

We do have validated reports and personal contact with trainees who have been referred to the GMC after repeated failures to pass the CSA being cited as part of the reason for (Un) Fitness to Practise. It is very reassuring to hear that this is not what the College expects and we would request if the College can urgently clarify this position with all the deaneries so that this practice is not allowed to further blight a trainee's career. We can't imagine a worse position than that of being kicked out of training and then being left with no realistic prospects of finding work due to outstanding FTP proceedings at the GMC and cannot reiterate the urgency that this must be dealt with.

We also need to help doctors who are now out of training. Many such doctors, we believe, would benefit from the RCGP defining a fair, realistic and objective route to entry on the GP register via Article 14. The GMC in such cases relies mainly on recommendations of the concerned Royal College and we would request that the RCGP takes a lead in this matter to create a pathway for doctors who have been failed by the CSA fiasco. BAPIO would be happy to liaise with other stakeholders (GMC) to facilitate this process if required.

BAPIO is not convinced that a 'staff grade' option is beneficial in the long term as it is likely to create a system of 'second class' GPs. However, there should be opportunity for trainees to remain in clinical practice so that they are able to complete the requirements for entry into the GP register of the GMC. We would be looking forward to hearing the RCGPs view on this aspect, we believe that a short term measure for the existing cohort of trainees who are currently stuck having been released from training but not having passed their exams, could be placing them in hospitals as Trust Grade doctors. We are aware that many hospitals are short of medical staff and, indeed ironically whilst there is growing criticism of Indian doctors many trusts are still going to India to recruit doctors!. These stuck trainees could provide valuable support to the NHS, whilst having time to find ways of qualifying as GPs. RCGP and the NHS Employers could facilitate this – and could I request you to consider as a matter of urgency to demonstrate the commitment to supporting these stuck trainees whilst we work on resolving the underlying problems

As far as possible, we are determined to reach a fair resolution for this situation with dialogue with the RCGP and I hope we will have further constructive communication that will help us reach our goal.

I, with my colleagues, would be available to meet on Monday the 21st February 2013 and hope this is convenient.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Ramesh

Ramesh Mehta