

British Medical Association
0300 123 1233 bma.org.uk
BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP
T 0207 383 6225 F 0207 383 6383
E njayesinghe@bma.org.uk



Dr Clare Gerada
Chair of Council
Royal College of General Practitioners
30 Euston Square
London
NW1 2FB

07 October 2013

Dear Clare

Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners examination

Following our helpful and constructive meeting last Thursday, I am writing to you formally on behalf of the British Medical Association (BMA). As you are aware the BMA has for some considerable time raised concerns with the College about the MRCGP CSA examinations.

The BMA is greatly concerned by the findings of the GMC commissioned Independent Review which was published on 26 September which found that there are significant differences in outcomes of the MRCGP examinations between UK black and minority ethnic (BME) graduates and international medical graduates (IMG) in comparison to White UK graduates. The Independent Review also clearly stated that it was unable to confidently exclude bias from the examiners in the way that they assess non-White candidates, as an explanation of these findings. The review concluded with a series of recommendations to improve the MRCGP.

The BMA represents a diverse membership and it is unacceptable that any of our members' careers may be affected by any form of unfair bias. The profession, and the public, need to have confidence in the way examinations are run, and our members should be confident that competition is fair. If there is a risk of bias, measures must be taken to address this. The RCGP must now recognise that this matter must be urgently addressed and take the appropriate steps, as recommended by the Independent Review, to resolve them.

The BMA would be willing to work with the RCGP to respond to the recommendations contained within the Independent Review, and facilitate a dialogue between all stakeholders, so that a common consensus on how to resolve this matter can be found. Any offer of assistance from the BMA is, however, on the precondition that the RCGP formally acknowledges the findings of the Independent Review, including that greater efforts are needed to improve the performance of IMGs relative to UK graduates, and BME doctors who graduated in the UK compared to their White counterparts.

Further that the College is willing to address the recommendations of the Independent Review, which also echo what the BMA has been calling for some time. These include:

1. Video recordings of all examinations for feedback and appeals.
2. Double marking of borderline cases through video recordings.
3. Ensuring that the diversity of actors and examiners is representative of the wider population.

4. Meaningful and personalised feedback following exam failure.
5. Research into what combinations of training experiences result in well prepared candidates.
6. Developing tools for trainees to establish their own level of preparedness to undertake the clinical skills assessment (CSA).
7. Analysis of entry exam scores in comparison to exits scores.
8. Increasing the number of attempts to undertake the CSA from four to six, and allowing candidates to sit the CSA every two months.
9. Personalised training to those who have been released from training, and offering two extra attempts at completing the CSA.
10. For trainees who are only failing the CSA, but met all other competencies, exploring the possibility of testing the CSA specific competencies in other ways, such as through video assessments and trainer feedback.

We acknowledge that some of the above are not completely within the powers of the RCGP. The BMA needs clarity about your position on the above points so that we can establish a way forward. As the BMA is actively exploring what measure we must take in support of our members a full and clear response no later than Monday 21 October would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Dr Krishna Kasaraneni
Chair, BMA GPC GP Trainees Subcommittee

Cc: Dr Mark Porter, Chair of Council, BMA
Dr Maureen Baker, Incoming Chair of Council, RCGP
Sue Rendel, Outgoing Chief Examiner, RCGP
Kamila Hawthorne, Incoming Chief Examiner, RCGP
Ruth Palmer, Executive Director of Education, RCGP
Ben Brown, Outgoing AiT Chair, RCGP
Seher Ahmed, Incoming AiT Chair, RCGP