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Submission No. 153
(Overseas Trained Doctors)
Date: 18/07/2011

The Chair

House of Representatives Committee

Inquiry into Registration Processes of Overseas Trained Doctor



Dear Sir/Madam,

I am an Overseas Trained Specialist Doctor who recently obtained national qualifications from an Australian Specialist College following the AMC introduced Specialist Assessment Pathway fulfilling the stipulated requirements including English Language. I am now looking for suitable employment and registration to practice as a Specialist Doctor. Further, I migrated to Australia as a permanent resident after assessment of my academic and professional qualifications and knowledge of English Language. For the last over 3 years I am a Citizen of Australia.

Although I was very keen to appear as witness before the Public Hearing held in Melbourne, I could not do so. Further, I find it difficult to attend the Hearing in Cairns or Townsville in August 2011. In the circumstances I would be grateful if you can kindly consider this letter at one of these Hearings.

I came to Australia in August 2006 and managed to get an honorary specialist training position in a leading hospital in Melbourne and temporary registration for a 5 year period fulfilling all requirements including the English Language. After one year I applied to the Australian College of my speciality and was exempted from Part 1 of the Specialist examination and found eligible to sit and complete Part 2 to qualify as a specialist in Australia.

With difficulty from 2007 to 2009 I found short term specialist training positions in a few hospitals, mostly on honorary basis without any remuneration and was able to complete 6 out of the 8 components of the Part 2 examination. The College gave me time till June 2011 to complete the other 2 components and advised me to get further exposure to improve prospects of successfully completing them.

I tried hard writing to numerous hospitals in various parts of the country where avenues existed but without success until February 2010 when a leading hospital in Melbourne offered me an

Observer position with prospects of getting a formal position when an occasion arises. When the possibility arose the hospital sponsored to give me an honorary position and applied to the Registration Board to renew my specific registration. I was informed by the Board that my registration has expired because I was not employed for one year and I have to apply afresh as a new registrant again with English qualification as the validity of my IELTS certificate has expired. In the circumstances, I concentrated on completing 2 outstanding components of Part 2 examination and passed them in June 2011 i.e. before the expiry of the 5 year temporary registration period I was granted in August 2006.

In spite of trying very hard to get a training position anywhere in Australia, it is indeed very unfair to deprive me of the honorary position obtained with great difficulty because of the expiry of the validity of my English Language certificate by not renewing my specific registration. I believed once the English qualification was accepted by the Registration Board it remains valid as long as I am resident in Australia i.e. in an English speaking environment.

While looking for suitable position to apply my knowledge and experience, now as an Australian qualified specialist, I inquired from the registration authorities on the prospects of getting registration when I find a suitable employment (which too is not an easy task). Presently I am eagerly awaiting a reply and wonder if the Registration Board will still insist on English Language requirement for registration, disregarding my recent Australian Specialist qualification obtained amidst numerous difficulties.

In narrating the difficulties I had to encounter in the course of my training, may I be permitted to bring to the kind notice of the learned committee, the unfairness of over and repeated enforcement of English Language requirement on Overseas Trained Medical Graduates (IMGs) and my humble suggestions to correct them.

Suggestions:

- 1. Once the stipulated level of English Language is achieved by an IMG and granted registration it should be valid for registration renewal and re-registration even if the validity of the relevant Language Certificate is expired, as long as the IMG is resident in the English speaking environment of Australia. If it is a temporary registration given for the purpose of obtaining specialist or other qualification, for a specific period, it should be valid for that entire period.**
- 2. Considering the difficulties encountered by IMGs to find suitable assignments for training or practice sometimes resulting in the expiry of their annual registration, they should be re-registered without penalizing them by imposing the Language requirement over again.**

3. While acknowledging that a fair English Language knowledge is required for medical practice in Australia, a reasonable standard should be set without making it a barrier for IMGs to take up medical practice in Australia.

4. If the intention of the Regulatory Authorities/Government is to restrict the number of IMGs taking up medical practice in Australia then other appropriate measures should have been taken without making English Language a barrier to restrict them after allowing them to reside in the country.

I admire the government and people of Australia as a nation with democratic and fair practices who treat all legal residents without discrimination. The above unfair practices could harm the reputation of the country. I do hope the Learned Committee will give serious consideration to the above unfair practices and will take appropriate measures to correct them without delay.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,



Dr Pramudi Neelapriyantha MBBS, MD, FRANZCR