

[Fate of Pakistani medical graduates working in US hangs in balance](#)

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ISLAMABAD: Doctors who graduated from Pakistani colleges may not be able to work in the United States (US) after Jan 2024 as the country has failed to meet the criteria of the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) and the deadline is approaching fast.

Defunct Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) had applied for the WFME accreditation and also invited its delegation to visit Pakistan but in 2019, the PMDC was dissolved and Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) was established. Subsequently, the WFME visit was postponed.

In order to get accreditation from the WFME, Pakistan has time till January 2024 and the current Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) Act at present does not meet the criteria to get recognition from the world body.

The PMC, on the other hand, claimed that it had “formally initiated the application process for the recognition” and the entire process, including on-site visit by the WFME, is expected to take 12 to 15 months, which is well within the time frame of Jan 2024.

PMA official expresses fear Pakistan may jump WFME recognition deadline; PMC says nothing to worry about

According to a senior official of the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS), around 25pc of the doctors working in the US has foreign qualifications.

“US’s Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), after realising that the quality of foreign graduates was deteriorating due to mushroom growth of private-for-profit colleges, on Sept 21, 2011, announced that after January 2023 graduates of only those countries having recognition from WFME will be allowed to appear in United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE),” the official said, adding that the deadline was later extended to January 2024 due to Covid-19.

Though the PMDC had started the process, it was removed via a presidential ordinance and eventually the PMC was established in its stead.

The PMC started claiming itself to be a licensing body and powers to inspect medical colleges were given to universities. In other words, the PMC does not have control over medical education in the country.

In case of failure to take timely measures, Pakistan might miss the deadline, rendering graduates of Pakistani medical colleges unable to practice medicine in the US.

Talking to Dawn, Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) Secretary General Dr Qaiser Sajjad said it was unfortunate that the PMC had cancelled the visit of the WFME.

“It is not going to be easy to get accreditation by 2024 as there is a long list of conditions which include quality of education, criteria for inspections of colleges, rules, faculty and many other things,” the official added.

Process underway

The PMC, in a written statement, claimed that it has formally initiated the application process.

The assessment, including physical visit by the WFME, is expected to take 12 to 15 months, which is well within the time frame of 2024 when the WFME recognition will become mandatory to practice medicine in the US.

“The PMC will be closely liaising with the WFME and other international organisations to ensure that all requirements for recognition are fully met prior to the actual assessment and inspection process of the WFME.”

The WFME recognition process initiated runs its full course divided over phases with extensive data and information submissions made and evaluated as per the steps of the WFME process culminating in the final physical visit and assessment of the PMC and selected medical colleges,” it stated.

“It has taken the commission extensive efforts and continued work for almost 18 months to prepare for the WFME process, which is now complete.

The formal application to the WFME to initiate the process required the prior approval of the new 2022 National Standards for Recognition of Medical and Dental Colleges and Teaching Hospitals as well as the 2022 National Medical and Dental Curricula, which have recently been approved and notified....”

The commission has over the last year worked tirelessly to ensure that all regulatory processes, including the recognition and accreditation of teaching hospitals and colleges as well as the admission and examination process and especially the national licensing examination are designed and implemented at the highest international standards including the introduction of digital licensing for practitioners,” it stated.

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