



MEDIA RELEASE

AMC Meets Needs of Changing Healthcare System

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There has been unprecedented development in medical education in Australia - with the Australian Medical Council (AMC) accrediting 13 proposed new or revised medical schools and courses and applications for recognition by two new medical specialties in the last 12 months.

Announcing a range of decisions made at the Council's Annual General Meeting, AMC President Dr Joanna Flynn said the key issue was the rapid increase in the volume and complexity of work being done by the Council.

"In 2005 we said that medical education in Australia was dynamic and going through a period of unprecedented change. In 2006, that remains the case - the change has continued, but the pace of change has escalated and the complexity of the system has also increased," Dr Flynn said.

The last year has demonstrated that the Council's recognition and accreditation programs are robust, flexible and adapting to meet the needs of Australia's rapidly changing healthcare system, Dr Flynn said.

During the year the Council has:

- Expanded its entry-exam for International Medical Graduates so it is now available off-shore
- Advised the Minister for Health and Ageing, Mr Tony Abbott, on the case for recognition of sport and exercise medicine and addiction medicine as new medical specialties
- Conducted accreditation assessments of 13 proposed, new or existing university medical schools
- Accredited the training program of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (see separate media statement)
- Extended the deadline for the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACCRM) to provide a revised application for initial accreditation. The AMC will complete its assessment of the application in January 2007
- Developed new standards for the accreditation of medical schools and for the accreditation of specialist medical training programs. Key changes include enhanced standards in several areas to reflect changes in the environment in which medical schools operate. These changes include greater competition between schools for clinical places and for the financial resources available to medical

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schools, and emerging areas of importance in the medical education curriculum, such as safety and quality in health care and inter-professional education

- Reviewed its accreditation processes and began a review of its specialty recognition process.

Dr Flynn said the AMC had deliberately taken a partnership approach to the role of the AMC and medical education providers. The AMC is the peak accreditation and standards body for medical education in Australia – the colleges and the universities provide the training.

“With Australia poised for comprehensive reform of medical regulation and accreditation, the AMC is well placed to share its expertise,” Dr Flynn said.

Medical school accreditation

AMC accreditation is mandatory for all university medical schools, which must meet explicit accreditation standards. The accreditation process involves detailed analysis of the proposed curriculum and medical school resources, rigorous review of clinical training opportunities and visits from clinical and community based assessment teams.

“There are very significant resource implications for the Council in ensuring new medical schools in Australia are training students who will be safe to practise medicine in Australia when they graduate,” Dr Flynn said.

She said the accreditation process was “about best practise and ensuring that Australian medical schools are delivering the best medical education possible”.

“The new medical schools continue to dominate the landscape in medical education accreditation. Setting up new schools is a serious challenge that requires significant resources from the AMC to ensure training standards are met,” Dr Flynn said.

The challenge continues for several years, at least until the courses produce their first graduates.

“The AMC is committed to monitoring progress of the implementation of the new courses and we will continue to work with our stakeholders (state and federal governments, state health authorities and universities) who will remain responsible for providing medical training,” Dr Flynn said.

All medical schools reviewed by the AMC during 2006 received positive assessments from the Accreditation Team. Executive summaries of the AMC Accreditation Reports are available on the AMC website (**www.amc.org.au**). A range of strengths is detailed in each report, and in all cases opportunities for improvement were identified to promote continuous improvement, not because they were central to the successful accreditation of the school.

In summary the AMC:

- Made three follow-up assessment visits to newly established medical schools at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Bond University and Griffith University, all of which began teaching in 2005. The 2006 visits reviewed the success of the early years of

the course and analysed detailed plans for the later years of the course

- Conducted two assessments of proposed new medical schools, at the University of Wollongong (graduate entry program) and the University of Western Sydney (largely school leaver entry). Both these schools are planning to take their first students in 2007
- Assessed major changes to AMC-accredited courses, including the proposed delivery of Monash University's AMC-accredited medical course at Monash University Malaysia; plans by the University of New South Wales and Monash University to add a graduate entry stream to their accredited medical courses; and plans for a major change to the University of Newcastle medical course
- Extended the accreditation of three of the established medical schools - the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Western Australia; the School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry & Health Sciences, University of Melbourne and the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide
- Reviewed submissions for new medical schools at Deakin University and the University of Notre Dame, Sydney.

Ends.

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