

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 11 June 2024 6:36 PM
To: Specialist IMG Pathways Review
Subject: Registration standard: specialist registration

Dear AHPRA,

I would like to comment on the proposed changes to specialist registration standards for SIMGs. I am a Specialist Anaesthetist working in regional [REDACTED] Australia. In my role as ANZCA Supervisor of Training, I have worked with numerous anaesthetic SIMGs over the last [REDACTED] years, some as colleagues attempting to pass their ANZCA Final Exam after their ANZCA assessment found them partially comparable and they worked in an Area of Need as independent specialists, and other SIMGs as registrars or advanced trainees for whom I acted as their ANZCA and lately AHPRA co-supervisor.

In terms of 4 SIMG colleagues, 2 passed their Final exam but one required 5 attempts over several years to pass. The other 2 worked for a time in an Area of Need, but eventually returned to their home country. In terms of 4 trainees for whom I was a supervisor also assessed as partially comparable by ANZCA, 2 were so dangerous we had to remove them from the registrar on-call roster (they were fully qualified in their home countries). 1 took 4 attempts to pass their ANZCA Final Exam over 4 years. 1 who recently passed their Irish Anaesthesiology Final Exam and training requirements, has just failed their ANZCA Final Exam. All of these SIMGs had easily understandable English language skills.

The point of this anecdote is to say, our health system and ANZCA training requirements, are sufficiently different, that these qualified specialist anaesthetists from other countries struggle when they arrive to meet the ANZCA training standard. The SIMG pass rate for the ANZCA final exam is around 37% each year. The time they take to pass the exam can be the same amount of time our own trainees spend in their entire ANZCA training (5 years). SIMGs do face discrimination [REDACTED] - few of them are being employed in Metropolitan hospitals to complete their supervision requirements, which can leave them obtaining positions in non-ANZCA accredited departments which have less support to help the SIMG pass their ANZCA requirements and less support for the SIMG to continue to develop their skills. Even in our ANZCA accredited department with a lot of support for their Final exam, they have struggled to pass due to the need over several years for them to adapt to ANZCA expectations and Australian health systems.

The danger in developing a "fast-track" pathway for anaesthetic specialists and having SIMGs work in Areas of Need is that they will practice with less supervision and less support. The ANZCA Final Exam focuses primarily on whether an anaesthetist is safe. We know from the final exam statistics only 37% SIMGs pass, meaning the SIMG has been deemed not to be up to the standards of other ANZCA trained anaesthetists. "Fast-tracking" SIMGs to work as specialists without this ongoing oversight places patient safety at risk. Australians have high expectations for a safe anaesthetic and we are one of the safest countries in the world to have an anaesthetic. This must be paramount in any consideration of our anaesthetic workforce.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
Specialist Anaesthetist, [REDACTED]