



BY EMAIL ONLY

Date: May 21, 2021

To: Dr. Ira Ripstein, President, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba  
Dr. Scott McLeod, Chair, Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada

From: Dr. Joshua Aquin, President, Professional Association of Residents and Interns of Manitoba  
Dr. Nicole Cousins, Vice President, Professional Association of Residents and Interns of Manitoba

Cc: Dr. Brian Postl, Dean, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Manitoba  
Dr. Cliff Yaffe, Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education, University of Manitoba  
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**RE: Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination Part II (MCCQEII)**

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) attempted its first sitting of the new, virtually proctored MCCQEII examination. The administration of this exam was, by many accounts, a major failure. Over 50% of candidates in both Manitoba and across Canada had their exams terminated part-way through due to technical problems. Many examiners and/or standardized patients failed to show up for parts of the exam, and numerous other issues were reported that were beyond candidates' control. As of the second sitting on May 20<sup>th</sup>, we continue to receive reports of unresolved issues and cancellations. With four weeks of exams remaining and minimal contingency time, there is a lack of confidence that this will be resolved.

Affected candidates were informed that they would have to complete the entirety of the examination again, with no promise that they would be able to do so this spring. Reports from candidates suggest that the MCC shared little information with them, and was unprepared to address candidates' concerns. Anecdotally, it appears that some candidates were treated by the MCC in a manner bordering on unprofessional in their interactions. During a time of extraordinary psychological and emotional stress for physicians, it is profoundly disheartening to hear these accounts.

While we can accept and acknowledge that technical issues may arise from any new exam, both the scope of the problem as well as how the MCC responded to candidates is unacceptable. Furthermore, the rescheduling of this full-day exam means that affected residents and/or attending physicians will be pulled from their clinical duties, during the peak of the third COVID-19 wave in Manitoba. We strongly object to pulling essential clinical staff from their duties during a time where resident physicians are facing mandatory redeployments to COVID-19 wards.

Resident physicians in Manitoba no longer have confidence that the Medical Council of Canada is capable of meeting the high standards necessary to assess the competence of Canadian physicians. The



general public should also be concerned as to the quality of physician assessments by the MCC, particularly the MCCQEII examination, which demonstrably no longer represents a gold-standard of physician assessment.

Strong alternatives exist to assess physician skills and competence in Canada. Both the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) maintain rigorous assessment standards. Unlike the MCC, both have successfully adapted to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it is true that assessment of practical skills remains challenging for all examiners during the pandemic, both the CFPC and RCPSC are able to mitigate this risk by mandating continuing education and training throughout a physician's career. The MCC has no such mandate.

There is the potential for tangible harms to both the healthcare system and the people of Manitoba if candidates are forced to continue taking or retaking the MCCQEII exam in its current form. It has been over 19 months since the last successful sitting of this exam, with no evidence that this problem will resolve in the days or months ahead. PARIM therefore sees no alternative but to implore the CPSM and FMRAC to follow the lead of provinces such as Ontario and Nova Scotia and remove the MCCQEII exam as a requirement for full medical licensure amongst the graduating cohorts during COVID-19.

Our province's well trained, highly skilled physicians need to be on the front-line caring for patients at this critical time. Every extra hour spent on this exam takes a doctor away from a patient in need of care. We thank you for your attention and look forward to your reply.

Regards,

Dr. Joshua Aquin, MD, CCFP  
President, PARIM

Dr. Nicole Cousins, MD, MSc  
Vice-President, PARIM