FAQs on Accreditation
March 2016

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?
Accreditation is a peer-reviewed continuous quality improvement process in which the services and operations of an institution are examined by a third-party accrediting agency to ensure that applicable standards are being met.

WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT IN POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION (PGME)?
Accreditation plays an integral role in the future of both the postgraduate medical education program as well as the postgraduate medical trainee. Residency programs at each university must be of such quality in order to ensure that their trainees meet the competencies required of physicians to serve Canadians in a professional, safe, and healthy manner.

WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT TO ME?
Accreditation is an opportunity to promote your program’s strengths and identify areas for improvement. Accreditation is meant to improve the quality of your residency education. It seeks to ensure that all necessary resources are available and utilized efficiently and effectively to enable residents to meet the training requirements of their specialty, subspecialty or area of focused competence.

WHICH BODIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PGME ACCREDITATION IN CANADA?
In Canada, the process of ensuring PGME program quality is accomplished through the certification Colleges: the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College), the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) and the Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ). Their responsibility is to accredit residency programs including the sites of training.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF ACCREDITATION?
Accreditation assesses each program based on general standards and specialty-specific standards. The accreditation process’s major objectives are:

1. To improve the quality of Postgraduate Medical Education;
2. To provide a means for objective assessment of residency programs;
3. To provide guidance to universities in the development of new residency programs; and
4. To assist Program Directors in reviewing and improving the conduct and educational quality of their programs.

WHAT DOES THE PGME ACCREDITATION PROCESS IN CANADA CONSIST OF?
The PGME accreditation process in Canada is based on a system of regular formal full University survey visits that occurs every six years. The survey visit provides a first-hand peer-review evaluation of each accredited program, and a determination of the extent to which each program meets the General Standards of Accreditation of the three Colleges. Programs on a regular six-year cycle will typically also have undergone a mid-point internal review at the three year mark led by their own institution.

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION?
The Royal College, CFPC and the CMQ have developed national conjoint standards for the evaluation and accreditation of residency programs. Evaluation of each residency program are based on compliance with meeting these standards. There are A standards, which are institution level standards, and B standards, which are program level standards. The CFPC Red Book is complementary to and consistent with the B standards and will clarify or expand on the B standards as they relate to the education of family physicians.

WHAT IS A SURVEYOR?
A surveyor ensures that standards for residency education are being maintained in all programs. Surveyors are part of a team that visits the medical school during the scheduled on-site process.

WHO ARE THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TEAM?
The basic accreditation survey team consists of 10 or more surveyors, depending on the number of programs
to be reviewed. In addition, representatives from several organizations involved in the accreditation of residency programs also attend. These include: residents from RDoC or in the province of Québec from the Fédération des médecins résidents du Québec (FMRQ); one consultant from the Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations (ACAOH); one representative from the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FMRAC); and one observer from the Licensing Authority of the province where the survey is being conducted.

IS MY OPINION VALUED?

Residents are critical to the accreditation process, and our input is highly valued. Accreditation provides residents with a mechanism to effect positive changes in our residency programs that, in many situations, will result in significant long-term benefits.

Accreditation is your opportunity to openly and honestly evaluate and help improve the quality of your residency program. The feedback you provide to the survey team will help programs to continue to promote areas of strength and, at the same time, focus on areas that need improvement.

Maintaining standards means maintaining excellent programs and producing physicians who are ready for practice.

WHAT ARE MY RISKS?

Accreditation is a peer-reviewed process of continuous quality improvement and is based on Standards common to all postgraduate medical training programs in Canada. Maintaining the standards means maintaining excellent programs and producing physicians who are ready for practice. A resident would not lose their position due to an accreditation status.

Accreditation is NOT a process to determine:
- Excellence of departments
- Excellence & reputation of research
- Quality & expertise of clinical faculty
- Moral worth of program directors
- Performance of residents

WHAT IS THE RDOC PRE-ACCREDITATION QUESTIONNAIRE?

The RDoC questionnaire was initially developed in 1983 and updated in 2014 and is aligned to the conjoint B Standards.

The RDoC questionnaire is circulated by the Provincial Housestaff Organization to all residents in both Family Medicine and Royal College specialty programs, approximately 6-8 months prior to the on-site survey. Reports are prepared by the Provincial Housestaff Organization (one report each for Family Medicine and Royal College specialty programs) and sent to RDoC for review and then distributed only to the resident surveyors on the Royal College and CFPC survey teams.

Survey results are confidential and anonymized. Resident surveyors may share pertinent, de-identified information with the survey team.

The pre-accreditation questionnaire is only one tool that is available to the resident surveyors to help them understand the resident on-the-ground perspective on his/her training.
WHAT IS THE TIMELINE OF RESIDENT INPUT FOR THE ON-SITE SURVEY?

**RDoC Pre-accreditation Questionnaire**

- **6-8 months prior**: PHO distributes pre-accreditation questionnaire to all residents in programs under review to ensure that the requisite response rates are achieved: 60% for Family Medicine programs and 50% for Royal College specialty programs.
- **2 weeks prior**: PHO closes survey and writes reports. One for Family Medicine programs and one for Royal College specialty programs.
- **1 week prior**: RDoC/PHO sends pre-accreditation reports to resident surveyors.
- **Full survey**: Resident surveyors share information on strengths and challenges, as well as red flags highlighted in the pre-accreditation reports, with the survey team.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ACCREDITATION?

Royal College and CFPC survey team discussions occur every evening following meetings with the programs, faculty, residency program committee and residents and, at the end of the week, the recommendations of the survey team is provided verbally to the program director at the exit meeting and the report to the Accreditation Committees of the Royal College and the CFPC. The final decision on accreditation is the responsibility of the Accreditation Committees.

I AM INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AS A RESIDENT SURVEYOR. HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Residents who are interested in volunteering as a resident surveyor are welcome to complete our expression of interest form online. External review and full survey volunteer opportunities arise during the year and you may be contacted regarding your availability and interest.

For more information on Accreditation, visit our website at: residentdoctors.ca