

MEMORANDUM

To: Provincial and Territorial Ministries of Health
Postgraduate Deans and Deans of Faculties of Medicine
Postgraduate Managers
Royal College Specialty Committee Chairs
National Specialty Societies
Royal College committees (Assessment Committee, Accreditation Committee, Credentials Committee, Committee on Specialties)
Resident Doctors of Canada (RDoC)
Fédération des médecins résidents du Québec (FMRQ)
Le Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ)
The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)
Provincial and Territorial Medical Associations
The Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FMRAC)
Medical Council of Canada (MCC)
Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS)
HealthCareCAN

From: Jason R. Frank, Director, Specialty Education, Strategy and Standards, Office of Specialty Education

Subject: Discipline Recognition: Area of Focused Competence (AFC) in Neuro-Intervention

Date: January 14, 2021

Recognizing the importance of communications with our stakeholders and transparency in committee decision-making, the Royal College is issuing this memo to notify you that the Committee on Specialty Education (CSE) has formally approved a new Area of Focused Competence (AFC) in Neuro-Intervention.

This update includes the results of the national consultations conducted for this application during summer 2020, as well as the resulting decisions made by the Committee on Specialties (COS) and the CSE at their recent fall 2020 meetings.

Background

An AFC is an area of specialty medicine that addresses a legitimate societal and patient population need that was unmet by the system of primary and subspecialty disciplines. AFCs are akin to clinical fellowship training in that they are equivalent to one to two years of additional training beyond certification in one's primary or subspecialty area. However, unlike clinical fellowships which differ across training sites, AFC programs offer national standards



for training in a discipline, as well as stewardship via the establishment of a Royal College AFC Specialty Committee.

The approval process for an AFC application consists of a two-part review by the COS, the latter part of which consists of a national consultation of stakeholders. Final approval of an AFC is delegated to the CSE.

Neuro-Intervention

The Office of Specialty Education received an application for the recognition of Neuro-Intervention in spring 2020. Since then, the COS has deliberated on the application's educational merits and assessed, based on specific criteria, its optimal configuration in specialty medicine, and has weighed both the benefits and concerns articulated by stakeholders. In response to some identified concerns and owing to each committee's judgement that they are minor in nature, the COS and the CSE have requested clarification from the applicant to occur in tandem with its implementation. The results of the national consultations and the Part I and Part II decisions of the COS are summarized below and in the appendices.

Discipline name	Definition of new discipline	Key benefits cited in national consultations and during committee deliberations	Clarifications requested from applicant
Neuro-Intervention	Neuro-Intervention utilizes image-guided minimally invasive catheter or needle-based technology in combination with a comprehensive clinical understanding of diseases of the brain, head, neck and spine and its vasculature for the management of diseases affecting them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broad support across a large spectrum of stakeholders.• Evidence of growing clinical need for standardized training and specialists.• Improved patient care.• Formal recognition for trainees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with the Specialty Committee in Pain Medicine during implementation of the discipline, to achieve a mutually agreeable articulation of any overlap in competencies.• A description of the overlap between neuro-intervention and Neuroradiology, especially with respect to the available capacity for programs to offer all trainees appropriate case volumes in light of Neuro-intervention's recognition.



Next Steps

The first step toward operationalization of new disciplines involves the organization of a working group to oversee the initial stages of implementation prior to the appointment of an AFC committee. The working group will be responsible for finalizing the standards documents, including the summative portfolio, and the appointment of the AFC committee to oversee the discipline.

If you have any questions or concerns, I invite you to contact me or my office at 1-800-668-3740 or by email at cos@royalcollege.ca.

Sincerely,

Jason R. Frank, MD, MA (Ed), FRCPC
Director, Specialty Education, Strategy and Standards
Office of Specialty Education

APPENDIX A – Neuro-Intervention

Response Rates

Stakeholder	Response Rate	In favour	Neutral	Not in favour	Uncertain
Ministries of Health	3/13 (23%)	2/3 (66%)	1/3 33%	-	-
Deans of Medicine	1/17 (6%)	1/1 (100%)	-	-	-
Postgraduate Deans	7/17 (41%)	7/7 (100%)	-	-	-
Specialty Committee Chairs	6/6 (100%)	5/6 (83%)	-	1/6 (17%)	-
National Specialty Societies*	2/7 (29%)	2/2 (100%)	-	-	-
Resident Associations	1/2 (50%)	1/1 (100%)	-	-	1/1 (%)
Sister Colleges/National Organizations†	1/4 (25%)	-	1/1 (100%)	-	-
Provincial/Territorial Medical Associations	1/12 (8%)	1/1 (100%)	-	-	-
Medical Regulatory Authorities	0/14 (0%)	-	-	-	-
Fellowship Directors	3/8 (38%)	3/3 (100%)	-	-	-
TOTAL (solicited)	26/87 30%	22/26 (85%)	2/26 (8%)	1/26 (4%)	0
Unsolicited	1		-	-	1/1 (100)

* Canadian Association of Radiologists, Canadian Association of Interventional Radiologists, Canadian Society of Clinical Neurophysiologists, Canadian Society of Neuroradiology, The Canadian Neurological Society, The Canadian Neurosurgical Society, Canadian Neurological Societies Federation

† CMQ, HealthCareCAN, MCC, CaRMS



Thematic Summary

In the open-text responses, the following benefits of recognition were raised:

Subtheme	Sources							
	Ministries of Health	Deans and Postgraduate Deans	Specialty Committee Chairs	National Organization	Resident Organization	Fellowship Directors	Prov/Terr Medical	Unsolicited
Increase number of specialists with this expertise.							X	
Retain Canadian neuro-interventionists and increase in credibility of Canadian neuro-intervention on an international scale.				X		X		
Address growing clinical need for these types of specialists.		X	X					X
Leadership for the advancement of knowledge, the organization of care, research and education in this area.				X				
Improve the level of practitioner knowledge and technical skill, anticipated to lead to better quality of patient care.	X							
Raise and maintain minimum training standards to ensure patients receive the best possible care.		X						
Better stroke and aneurysm care, advanced training for unusual vascular diseases of the brain and spinal cord, and training in special skill for complex cerebrospinal fluid leaks, such as digital subtraction myelography.			X					
Standardize training in an area with a high burden of disease, and which is likely to experience growth with an aging population.				X				
Standardize training in an area which is specialized and technology-dependent, thereby ensuring safety and efficiency in the application of skills.	X	X	X	X		X		
That standardization of training will improve and formalize the multidisciplinary approach to practice and formally establish clear pathways for entry.		X	X			X		
Provide a clear framework to more easily identify gaps (in training and ultimately practice).		X						
Recognition of those with appropriate training and experience.		X				X	X	
Assurance of uniform expectations, which is valuable to institutions when assessing physicians for faculty appointments.		X						