

U of C language training program helps international medical doctors fast-track into Alberta healthcare system

A University of Calgary project is helping internationally trained doctors upgrade their professional English language skills and their knowledge of Canadian healthcare culture in an effort to reduce the time it takes these physicians to start practicing medicine in Alberta.

Of the 24 International Medical Graduates (IMGs) who participated in the 2006 pilot project, 15 successfully obtained residency seats or positions as clinical assistants in Alberta. A second cohort of 40 doctors is currently completing the 16-week course of the Medical Communication Assessment Project (M-CAP).

“The M-CAP empowers us to cross cultural borders and break the language barriers, bringing us one step closer to becoming effective and successful clinicians in the Alberta healthcare system,” says **current program participant Dr. May Mones, a family physician from the Philippines.**

The joint initiative of the Faculties of Education and Medicine is funded by Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, and Citizenship & Immigration Canada. It targets internationally-trained physicians who are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants and who have passed the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Exam and MCCQE1 exams.

“From our experience so far, it’s clear that language difficulties often hold back IMGs from being able to demonstrate their actual level of clinical skills and knowledge. So we aim the program directly at professional language proficiency,” says **project co-creator David Watt, a professor in the Faculty of Education.**

The program helps participants develop their professional English proficiency with a performance-based teaching approach that involves professional actors, medical advisors and language instructors. Doctors are introduced to a range of patients and cases of increasing complexity in a controlled setting at the Medical Skills Centre in U of C’s Faculty of Medicine. Participants then complete an eight week practicum placement in the community.

“The Faculty of Medicine is pleased to host this program,” says **co-creator Dr. Rod Crutcher, an associate professor of family medicine in the Faculty of Medicine.** “Alberta has a shortage of physicians. This program is one initiative to help address current shortages by giving internationally trained Alberta physicians the opportunity to both demonstrate and refine their clinical skills while improving their language proficiency.”

Research shows that the longer immigrant professionals are out of practice, the less likely they are to re-integrate into their profession. At the same time, Alberta is experiencing a shortage of medical professionals with an estimated 1,000 doctors needed across the province in all specialties.

Media contacts:

Michelle Cook, Communications Manager, Faculty of Education, 403.220.2619, Cell: 403.869.2619
Karen Thomas, Director, Media Relations, Faculty of Medicine, 403.220.2431; Cell: 403.651.1112