

Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) Program

Program Description

The ARC is intended as a learning experience, a continuing professional development course based on each physician's own practice. At the end of the process, graduates of this program will be able to use the tools we have provided within their practice and continue to critically reflect on their day-to-day work. The alternative route is intended to be evaluative in a formative sense meaning that participants will not pass or fail, but will continuously endeavour to improve their practice through the use of evidence-based medicine. A peer tutor will be assigned to each physician to help guide them through their work and reflections.

The alternative route to certification program includes three components:

- a survey of the candidate's communication skills,
- the development by each candidate of a clinical practice learning profile based on his/her own practice (30 mini-Pearls exercises)
- three self-directed, evidence-based practice assessments (3 audit-Pearls)

The communication survey is a means for physicians to better understand how well their communication with patients is perceived. Patients are selected at random by the office staff from the daily list of scheduled appointments. The survey is comprised of a series of matched questionnaires; one filled in independently by the patient and the other by the physician. The questions focus on communication during 30 separate patient encounters. The data from the questionnaires is then analyzed by a third party and a report is generated to be reviewed by the physician.

The practice learning profile is developed by reviewing clinical questions arising from patient encounters. These are normally focused questions or issues that can be answered quickly from a properly guided review of literature or other evidence-based data sources such as MD Consult. These question-answer exercises are called mini-Pearls exercises and they encourage the physician to develop a learning profile with regard to his/her own practice.

The assessments (audit-Pearls) involve an evidence-based review of a clinically relevant problem or question that is, in the judgment of the physician, deserving of improvement or change from current practice to determine the best practice criteria. This exercise is designed to encourage the physician to focus on his/her own practice by critically appraising it. In reality, it is a self-audit.

Term of the Program

Enrolment for the alternative route to certification (ARC) will be open up to December 31st, 2012. The program was launched in April 2008. The estimated time it will take candidates to complete the program is between 9-12 months and must not exceed 18 months.

Eligibility

Eligibility for this program is restricted to family physicians who:

- are members in good standing of the College of Family Physicians of Canada,
- are currently in active practice in Canada,
- have held a full and unrestricted license to practice family medicine independently in a province /territory of Canada (as verified with a certificate of standing) for the five years immediately preceding the date of application and
- have been in practice in a province or territory of Canada for the five years immediately preceding the date of application.

For purposes of eligibility for the alternative route, each eligible candidate must be a family physician actively involved in a medical practice in which he/she is currently providing ongoing medical care for patients for a number of different medical presentations. Full-time emergency practice is considered family practice for purposes of eligibility for the alternative route. Candidates must submit a written description of their medical practice including the types of patients seen and services offered.

Candidates will also be required to provide references from two colleagues. Both referees must be physicians who are licensed and in good standing in the same jurisdiction as the applicant. They should have known the applicant for at least two years. At least one referee should also be a member of the College of Family Physicians of Canada who holds the CCFP designation. Both referees are to confirm that:

- i. the physician is in good standing in the medical and general community ; and
- ii. the physician's practice meets the description outlined above

Physicians whose practices are limited to the provision of procedural services for patients for whom they do not provide ongoing family practice care will not be eligible for the alternative route to certification.

All applications are subject to review by the Board of Examiners of the College of Family Physicians of Canada who will make final rulings on all questions of eligibility.

Application Process

The application for the Alternative Route to Certification program can be found on our website at www.cfpc.ca or by contacting Ms. Liz Welsh at 905-629-0900 ext 409.