

Dear residents,

Supporting qualified physicians in the delivery of care is a priority for the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), and we have been instrumental in advocating for changes that have happened in the past short while to ensure this will continue to occur during the COVID-19 crisis.

Because of the COVID-19 situation we postponed the spring Certification Examination in Family Medicine that is usually held every April. This is in keeping with social isolation requirements and residents can be available to support patient care at hospitals and clinics. We also want to ensure candidates have time to prepare properly for the exam.

We have rescheduled the examination for October 2020; however, this delay will not prevent you from working as a physician upon completion of your residency program. Each province's medical regulatory authority/licensing body has decided to issue special licences to practise medicine, called provisional or restricted licences, to new graduates who meet two criteria:

- They must be deemed to have successfully completed their residency program by demonstrating all the competencies expected of a resident at the end of their second year.
- They must be recognized as being eligible to sit the Certification Examination in Family Medicine. The medical regulatory authorities have indicated they expect new graduates to sit the certification examination as soon as possible after completing residency.

With these licences you are considered the most responsible physician when caring for patients and you will be able to practise the full scope of family medicine for which you have been trained. The main difference is that these licences will be time-limited; they will convert to full and unrestricted licences upon certification.

The CFPC considers the examination a necessary final step to certify individuals as having all the skills and knowledge needed to be effective family physicians. Assessment in residency programs plays a very significant role in determining readiness for certification, but it is not the sole factor. While it is true that competency-based assessment models are now more common in Canada, the system is not infallible. Including the exam as part of the College's certification system is considered the gold standard in a multi-input and robust system of assessment. We are not prepared to suspend this standard at this time but recognize the need to balance vigilance with practicality in the current environment.

Many of you are concerned that once you are out working, it might be too difficult to study and prepare for the exam in the fall. It is too early to know what the landscape will be at that time in terms of the pandemic. We are following the situation closely and are poised to reassess our decisions as needed and as more information becomes available.

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