



A Call for Support for Family Medicine Residents During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background

Due to the cancellation of non-essential services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, residents in Canada's 17 family medicine training programs are experiencing challenges in completing their education due to unavailable rotations, disrupted training schedules, postponed exams, and their focus on clinical work to support the health care system in this time of urgent need. The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) has postponed the spring 2020 Certification Examination in Family Medicine until October 2020 to ensure the health and safety of candidates, examiners, examination staff, and volunteers.

Provincial and territorial medical regulatory authorities have allowed for individuals completing programs in June 2020, who also meet and satisfy two conditions, to be issued special provisional licences to practise until certification exams can be completed. To qualify, residents must have:

- Documentation of the successful completion of their training programs issued by their universities
- Documentation of their eligibility to sit the Certification Examination in Family Medicine at the next available opportunity

Current efforts/challenges

As determined by their programs, some current family medicine residents may not be considered ready to practise under provisional licensure. As a result:

- Residents who cannot move into provisional practice will require supplementary training experiences, which will result in overlap with residents who are scheduled to complete their training in 2021; this double cohort will exist for a variable period starting in July 2020
- Programs have concerns about whether they have adequate educational resources for:
 - Training the double cohort of residents for the required extended training time
 - Covering resident salaries for the double cohort and funding for teachers for the extended training time
 - Addressing the double-cohort effect later in the year (in terms of having enough teachers and placements)

Due to COVID-19–related disruptions, family medicine residents who are completing their training in June 2020 may miss out on opportunities to consolidate their experiences and confidence in all domains of practice and care settings. There are concerns that this may affect their preparedness and/or willingness to practise in demanding under-served or resource-constrained environments.

Action required

- The CFPC is developing a plan that will allow family medicine residents to pursue optional supplemental educational experiences.
- Recognizing the extraordinary nature of the current situation and how such a program would eventually be structured, the CFPC anticipates the potential need for federal funding to support additional training for residents whose education was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Family medicine residents are providing essential support to the health care system but will need funding support from the government to pursue the training they are sacrificing to help respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Contact us

Health Policy and Government Relations
College of Family Physicians of Canada
(905) 629-0900
healthpolicy@cfpc.ca