ECFMG and IMGs in U.S. GME:
An Overview of the Basic Credential and Immigration Requirements

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Global Education in Medicine Services

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Session Overview

• ECFMG’s Role, Programs and Services

• Recruiting IMGs and Foreign National Physicians
  o Requirements
  o Timelines
  o Immigration options

• ECFMG J-1 Visa Sponsorship
  o Basic regulations
  o Roles and responsibilities

• General Issues and Considerations

• Discussion
Private, non-profit organization
Founded in 1956

Organizational Membership

American Board of Medical Specialties
American Medical Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association for Hospital Medical Education
Federation of State Medical Boards
National Medical Association
International Medical Graduate

**DEFINITION:** An international medical graduate (IMG) is *any* physician who received his/her basic medical degree from a medical school outside of the United States or Canada, regardless of country of citizenship

- This includes any U.S. citizen who received a medical degree from a school outside of the United States or Canada.
- *Foreign national IMGs* received a medical degree outside of the United States or Canada and require a visa to participate in U.S. GME
ECFMG Programs and Services
ECFMG in 2017

“Improving world health through excellence in medical education...”

Programs Supporting IMGs and U.S. GME

- ECFMG Certification
- ECFMG Certificate Holders Office (ECHO)
- ERAS Support Services
- Certification Verification Services (CVS)
- Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)

International Programs

- Electronic Portfolio of International Credentials (EPIC)
- Global Educational Exchange in Medicine & the Health Professions (GEMx)
- Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER)

http://www.ecfmg.org/programs/index.html
ECFMG Certification

ECFMG Certification assures residency program directors and the U.S. public that an IMG has met the minimum standards of eligibility to enter U.S. residency training.

**ECFMG Certification is required for:**

- IMG entry into ACGME-accredited GME
- USMLE Step 3
- State licensure
- J-1 visa sponsorship / ECFMG
Current Certification Requirements

▶ Medical Education Credentials
  • Completion of medical school curriculum of at least 4 years
  • School and graduation year listed in the Sponsor Notes tab of the WDMS*
  • Primary-source verification of medical diploma and transcript(s) by ECFMG

▶ USMLE Exams
  • Step 1 Basic Science
  • Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK)
  • Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS)

*World Directory of Medical Schools (World Directory)

http://www.ecfmg.org/certification/index.html
ERAS® Support Services

Designated “Dean’s Office” for IMGs applying to U.S. GME
In partnership with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)

Provides Support and Guidance to IMG Applicants
• Collects, reviews, transmits supporting documentation to ERAS
• Direct communication and advising throughout the process
• Informational updates and webinars

Assist International Medical Schools
• Submission of official documents electronically through ECFMG Medical School Web Portal (EMSWP)
• Support of ERAS Advisor
• On-going educational outreach programs and teleconferencing

http://www.ecfmg.org/eras/index.html
Certification Verification Service (CVS)

- CVS is a web-based service providing prompt, primary-source verification of an IMG’s ECFMG certification status
- CVS verification available to entities in the United States including credentialing agencies, accredited residency programs, state medical licensing boards
- Report sent via e-mail
- **Free of charge for GME programs**
- Account established by sending an e-mail to `cvsonline@ecfmg.org`

[www.ecfmg.org/cvs](http://www.ecfmg.org/cvs)
Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)

- Designated by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) to serve as the visa sponsor for all J-1 physicians in clinical training \textit{22 CFR §62.27(b)}
- Cooperates with DOS and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in tracking J-1 physicians in the \textit{Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)} database
- Collaborates with the U.S. academic medicine community on J-1 GME policies

http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html
Recruiting IMGs and Foreign National Physicians
# Basic Requirements for Participation in U.S. GME

- **International Medical Graduates**
  - ECFMG Certificate
  - Visa / visa status for all foreign nationals

- **U.S. Graduates**
  - Diploma, USMLE and/or COMLEX
  - Visa / visa status for all foreign nationals

- **Canadian Graduates**
  - Diploma, MCEE and/or USMLE
  - Visa / visa status for all foreign nationals
# Typical IMG Entry into U.S. GME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete medical school</td>
<td>May Previous year(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If IMG, complete ECFMG Certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete residency application process</td>
<td>August - February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ERAS</td>
<td>September - February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviews etc.</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• AOA Match</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NRMP Match</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program issues GME contract/letter of offer</td>
<td>February - AOA programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March - ACGME programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If foreign national, secure appropriate visa status</td>
<td>March - July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commencement of residency training</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Immigration
Who Needs a Visa?

All **foreign national** physicians need an appropriate visa and visa status to participate in U.S. GME.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Common for U.S. GME</th>
<th>Less Common for U.S. GME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• J-1</td>
<td>• J-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Exchange Visitor Physician&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Dependent&quot; with Employment Authorization Document (EAD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• H-1B</td>
<td>• Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Specialty Occupation Worker&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Immigration Terms

### Visa
- Issued by U.S. Consulate abroad; serves as an *entry permit* stamped in passport; expiration date applies to timetable for entry only, can expire once in the United States

### Visa Status
- Issued by U.S. Port-of Entry (DHS/CBP) or Regional Service Center (DHS/USCIS); reflects the immigration classification of the authorized activity and timeframe for U.S. stay (i.e., “J-1 status”, “H-1B status”); authorized stay may be limited to specific date or issued for “duration of stay”
# Basic J-1 and H-1B Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>J-1</strong></th>
<th><strong>H-1B</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exchange Visitor Physician</strong></td>
<td>ECFMG Department of State Department of Homeland Security <strong>SEVIS tracking</strong> <em>(Student &amp; Exchange Visitor Information System)</em></td>
<td>Department of Labor Department of Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulatory Oversight</strong></td>
<td>22CFR§62.27(b)</td>
<td><strong>Credentials and Examinations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECFMG Certification</strong></td>
<td>USMLE Steps1, 2CK, 2CS</td>
<td>ECFMG Certification USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Limit</strong></td>
<td>7 years maximum</td>
<td>6 years maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Generally hospital salary, can be home government or other</td>
<td>U.S. employer salary only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 year Return Home Obligation</strong></td>
<td>“Statement of Need” issued by home county Ministry of Heath</td>
<td>No service requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Regulation §212 (e) INA</strong></td>
<td><em>Must fulfill 2 years in the home country to be eligible for H-1B, L visas or any permanent residence status</em></td>
<td>Generally, H-4 cannot work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Permit for Spouse</strong></td>
<td>J-2 dependents can apply for employment authorization (EAD)</td>
<td>Generally, H-4 cannot work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processing Time/Fees</strong></td>
<td>$325 - ECFMG, $180 - SEVIS Paid by physician</td>
<td>Filing fees, anti-Fraud (paid by employer), premium processing etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Must fulfill 2 years in the home country to be eligible for H-1B, L visas or any permanent residence status*
J-1 Exchange Visitor Program
J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

- Public diplomacy initiative
- Educational and cultural exchange
  - 14 categories of J-1 exchange visitors
- Cross-cultural experiences integral to mission
- Focus on health, safety and welfare
- Compliance and monitoring responsibilities

ECFMG is the Sole Sponsor of J-1 physicians
Code of Federal Regulations 22CFR§62.27
J-1 Physician Category

- J-1 visa
  - Temporary, non-immigrant visa
  - Full-time educational training / GME (not employment)
- Requires evidence of strong ties to the home country
  - Statement of Need from Ministry of Health
- Imposes two-year home physical presence requirement
- Duration = 7 years maximum for progressive training
- Mandatory health insurance requirements for J-1s and J-2s
- Tracked in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System)

Requirement checklists available @
www.ecfmg.org/evsp/application-checklists.html
ECFMG J-1 Visa Sponsorship: Coordinated Effort

U.S. Department of State (DOS)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

ECFMG
EVSP
Regional Advisor

Teaching Hospital
Training Program Liaison (TPL)

Program Director
J-1 Physician
J-1 Physician + TPL = Complete Application

ACGME-accredited Specialty Programs

ACGME-accredited Subspecialty Programs

J-1 Sponsorship Program Categories

Non-standard Advanced Subspecialty Programs

ABMS-member Board Extensions*

*Only application type initiated by applicant

Application checklists and instructions available @ http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp
**Required J-1 Reporting**

TPLs have specific reporting responsibilities with respect to J-1 physicians. These include:

<table>
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<th>Reporting Requirement</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Any proposed change to the pre-approved training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed contract amendments (start date, training level, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious incidents or allegations (health, safety &amp; welfare)</td>
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ECFMG J-1 Program Compliance

Requires ONGOING Communication and Monitoring
General Issues and Considerations
Critical Issues for Incoming Residents

Credentials
• Graduation and issuance of final diploma and transcripts
• Receipt of passing USMLE exam scores
• Issuance of the ECFMG Certificate
• Verification of prerequisite training (U.S. or abroad)
• Eligibility for appropriate medical training license

Immigration
• Applicant’s current and previous U.S. immigration history
• Internal coordination of visa policies/applications
  o Visa sponsorship for GME – ECFMG/ J-1 (4 wks), H-1B, etc.
• Apply for and secure “visa status” to begin training on time
  o Consular processing - interview abroad, security clearance etc.
  o Change of status in United States
Critical Issues for Incoming Residents

Pre-training Checklist

• Confirm U.S. arrival to program
• Apply for and obtain a Social Security Number (SSN)
• Participate in program orientation
  o Identify training, language, cultural adjustments issues
• Obtain driver’s license
• Enroll in health insurance
• Verify state medical license
• Conduct employer I-9 verification (U.S. work/training authorization)
• Other

Timing is Key
Critical Issues for Continuing Residents

Continuation

• Progression in training level as evidenced by official GME contract
• Pre-approval to change or transfer training
  o Dates, location, program/institution, level, salary
• Evaluate duration of remaining visa eligibility
• Required reporting of issues
• Timely renewal of visa sponsorship

“Maintaining Visa Status” is Essential
## Important Links

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*Required Reporting*
Immigration Update

ECFMG Response to Executive Orders
• Compiled EO resources on web page
• Assigned dedicated case manager for impacted IMGs
• Consulted with immigration counsel and U.S. GME community
• Communicated with IMGs and U.S. programs
• Informing DoS of known visa denials
• Media engagement (50 responses/interviews)
• Continuing to monitoring the impact on IMGs across services

NRMP 2017 Match Results
• Overall IMG match rate was 53%, increase of ↑1.9% or 45 IMGs

Incoming J-1 physicians for July 1, 2017
• EVSP approved 2766 applicants for J-1 initial sponsorship with mid-June/July 1 start dates
• 98.7% of initial J-1 physicians arrived by August 15
• Visa denials of Pakistani physicians were resolved, 95.3% initial J-1 Pakistanis began their programs
• Reviewing data for more conclusive results

Visa Processing
• No significant issues scheduling consular interviews
• Some consulates have restored visa applications by drop box
• USCIS resumed H-1 premium processing
ECFMG House of Medicine Initiatives

Ensure broad understanding of the current requirement for IMGs in U.S. GME

- Expand outreach and training to the U.S. GME community through workshops, webinars, regional presentations etc.

Increase awareness of ECFMG programs, services and areas of expertise

- Actively participate in national GME meetings, conferences, advisory committees etc.

Collaborate on IMG policy issues, research and analysis

- Facilitate on-going communication and data sharing on IMGs trends
- Contribute to articles and IMG research
ECFMG
Expert Resource & Collaborative Partner on IMGs Issues

Contact for General ECFMG and Academic Medicine Initiatives

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Questions and Open Discussion