

4 March 2013

General
Medical
Council

Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London NW1 3JN

Via email

Switchboard: 0845 357 8001
Central Fax: 020 7189 5001
Central Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
www.gmc-uk.org

Dear Mr Howlett,

Re: Reference PE1463 - Effective thyroid and adrenal testing, diagnosis and treatment

Further to your request for a response from the GMC to the above petition, I hope that you will find it helpful if I explain the role of the GMC in relation to specific areas of medical practice such as Thyroid and Adrenal testing.

The purpose of the GMC is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine. To achieve this, one of our core legal functions is to regulate medical education and training so that patients now and in the future can be confident that they will receive safe, high quality medical care. We set standards and requirements that must be met on the ground; and check that they really are met, through quality assurance activity.

One of our sets of standards is "*Standards for curricula and assessment systems*". Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties submit their curricula to the GMC for approval against these standards. Looking specifically at the areas of Thyroid and adrenal testing the curricula that include this are General Practice, Endocrinology and Diabetes Mellitus and Otolaryngology (ENT). Each of these curricula (which can be found on our website and there are links in the attachment) outline the skills doctors in training need to demonstrate. For your information I have attached a summary of the sections of each curriculum relevant to this petition.

The GMC is satisfied that the submissions from the respective Royal Colleges in relation to the content and requirements of the curricula fulfil our standards and through our quality assurance processes we are satisfied that these are delivered.

Turning to doctors who have completed their post graduate training, the GMC has *Continuing professional development: guidance for all doctors* (pdf). This guidance has been developed

to enable doctors to use it to reflect on how their learning and development improves the quality of care they provide to patients and for the service in which they work. Each College provides support for its members, as an example the Royal College of General Practitioners has online courses that cover the curriculum for existing doctors to use for their CPD and there is a section with a number of modules on the area of "Metabolic Problems – endocrine and Metabolic problems".

To clarify any confusion, we note that the petition indicates that "*The current T4- only treatment, prescribed by the General Medical Council (GMC).....*". The GMC does not publish standards or guidelines around specific medical treatments, these are more normally produced by one of the medical bodies such as the Royal College of Physicians which we note are also respondents to this petition.

Should you require any further information please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Tara Willmott
Head of Education, Approvals

General Practice curriculum

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/gp.asp>

- 3.10: Care of People with Mental Health Problems Primary care management - trainees' learning outcomes/objectives tests competence in the management of metabolic problems.
 - Trainees are also given detailed case illustrations to learn from (Ref page 4).
- 3.17: Care of People with Metabolic Problems one of the key messages the curriculum informs that a trainee GP should be able to do is provide understand how common endocrine or metabolic disorders such as diabetes mellitus, thyroid or reproductive disorders can present.
 - Also as part of the learning outcomes in Primary care management, trainees should be able to understand the use and main limitations of tests commonly used in primary care to investigate and monitor metabolic or endocrine disease e.g. thyroid function tests. (Ref page 6).
 - Trainees are also referred to various learning resources such as an e-learning resource called *e-GP* this includes two curriculum-based e-learning modules on metabolic problems (Diabetes; Endocrine and Metabolic Problems), a number of sessions on obesity in adults and children, and a session on the examination of a patient with symptoms of an overactive thyroid. (Ref page 16).

Endocrinology and Diabetes Mellitus

http://www.gmc-uk.org/Endocrinology_Diabetes_Curriculum_AMENDMENTS_AUG_2012_081012_V0.pdf_50330155.pdf (pdf)

http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/endocrinology_and_diabetes_mellitus.asp

- Teaches and tests trainees' competencies in knowledge, skills and behaviours of disorders of the thyroid gland. Trainees are expected to understand the physiology and biochemistry of thyroid hormone, and to be competent to diagnose, manage and provide care for patients with thyroid disease, including thyroid eye disease and thyroid disorders during pregnancy. (Ref page 37).
- Trainees are expected to demonstrate knowledge and skills of the role and interpretation of imaging techniques in the diagnosis and management of endocrine disease. (Ref page 41).
- Trainees are taught work-based experiential learning and management of endocrine conditions such as tumours of the pituitary, thyroid or adrenal via personal ward rounds and Outpatient clinics and specialist endocrine clinics such as Thyroid nodule (Ref page 44).
- Teaches and tests trainees' competencies in knowledge, skills and behaviours of disorders of the adrenal gland (Ref page 38, 41,44).

Otolaryngology (ENT)

Otolaryngology Curriculum and Associated Assessment System (pdf)

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/otolaryngology.asp>

- At CCT the ENT surgeon is expected to among a host of other topics, manage conditions of the neck, thyroid and salivary glands. Thyroid conditions also form part of the core training in ENT. (Ref: page 22; 8. Manage conditions of the neck, thyroid and salivary glands).
- The ENT curriculum trains trainees in *Areas of special interest* which covers benign conditions and the management of benign tumours of the salivary glands, thyroid and other head and neck structures and these form the main part of the workload. (Ref: page 23; Areas of Special Interest).
- One of the key topics in Otolaryngology, specifically under head and neck is *Disorders of the thyroid and salivary glands*. (Ref: page 27; Key Topics).
- The curriculum also provides an *Initial Stage Overview* for trainees which concentrates on the early years of training i.e. CT1 to CT 3. During this *initial stage* trainees are taught to develop the basic and fundamental surgical skills common to all surgical specialties, together with a few surgical skills relevant to Otolaryngology and this includes *Disease of the head and neck* which covers training in thyroid and parathyroid disease. (Ref page 30; 3. Disease of the head and neck).
- Under the *Initial Stage Topics* section of the ENT curriculum, trainees learn to acquire common surgical conditions objectives. This section assumes that trainees have general medical competences consistent with a doctor leaving Foundation in the UK. It also assumes an on-going commitment to keeping these skills and knowledge up to date as laid out in GMP.
- Trainees are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relevant basic scientific principles for each of these surgical conditions which includes Thyroid, parathyroid disease and Adrenal gland disease and metabolic and endocrine disorders, and further be able to demonstrate competence in clinical skills by providing patients the relevant clinical care (as defined in Modules 1 and 5 of the curriculum; pages 31-39).
- Trainees from ST3 are required to understand the aetiology, presenting symptoms, signs and management of common conditions which include benign and neoplastic salivary gland disease, thyroid and parathyroid disease. (Ref page 44; 3. Disease of the head and neck).
- The final stages topics for all ENT trainees requires they develop knowledge, clinical and technical skills, competencies for thyroid malignancies. There are several modules which covers this though it should be noted that objective of the modules are for the trainee to understand the aetiology, presenting signs, symptoms and management of Thyroid and Parathyroid disorders. Which provide some indication of the breadth and depth of required knowledge and surgical skills, however the list should not be considered to be fully inclusive or exhaustive.(Ref pages 55, 63-64, 66).