



# Alberta International Medical Graduates Association Backgrounder

Alberta International Medical Graduates Association consists of doctors trained or educated in countries other than Canada. It also includes individuals and organizations interested in the challenges facing International Medical Graduates in Alberta.

## Our Mission

AIMGA is committed to the responsible, informed, and equitable integration of international graduate physicians into the Canadian Healthcare System. The Association aims for the recognition of skills and experience gained outside Canada, without compromising current Canadian medical ideals or standards.

## Our Vision

Our vision is to integrate IMGs into the Alberta Health Care System, thus working towards the benefit of the growing population of Alberta.

## Our Beliefs

- **International Medical Graduates** represent a skilled and professional workforce that should be utilized to support and improve Alberta's health care system.
- There should be **fair and equitable access** for all Alberta's international medical graduates to the medical licensing and training programs according to the Canadian standards.
- **All Albertans** should have the best health care in the world.
- There is a **physician shortage** in the province and that this shortage is affecting the quality of health care received by Albertans.
- As Alberta's immigrant population is rapidly increasing, there is a need for IMG's who can understand and respect the needs of Alberta's **culturally diverse population**.
- **Dialogue and cooperation** with decision makers at all governmental levels will promote the smooth integration of Alberta's international medical graduates into the Canadian health care system.

## Programs & Services

Incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2000, AIMGA is a vital resource of information, licensure support and networking opportunities for IMGs in Alberta. AIMGA also leads advocacy initiatives that promote the responsible, informed, and equitable integration of IMGs into the Canadian Healthcare System.

### **Policy Leadership & Research**

While supporting IMGs to reach licensure, we are also leading the drive for change. AIMGA provides a united and strong voice for IMGs in shaping policy issues at the provincial and federal levels. We are in close cooperation with key stakeholders such as the post-secondary institutions, the Alberta government, regulatory bodies and medical organizations.

### **AIMGA Forum**

This highly-active online discussion group keeps members informed and connected.

### **Yahoo Groups Online Networking**

This email and file sharing service allows AIMGA members to stay connected with current activities, projects, study groups and exam files.

### **Study Groups**

Connect with other IMGs as you work together to prepare for the MCEE, MCCQE Part I and Part II, and the OSCE exams.

### **Skill Development Workshops**

We can organize skill development workshops for licensure prerequisites such as CPR courses, Communication Proficiency, and Presentation Skills. After you pass the clinical evaluation exams, we can also set up practice sessions for your final interview.

### **Mentorships / Observerships**

We can assist in identifying these clinical training arrangements, where the IMG observes the physician. Although these arrangements are not recognized clinical practice, they are an excellent opportunity to maintain knowledge, prepare for clinical simulation exams and to build networks.



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### **The Issue:**

- **IMGs can play a vital role to alleviate Alberta's shortage of physicians**, while at the same time, providing economic, social and cultural benefits to the Alberta health care system, and without compromising the standards of Alberta's health care delivery.
- In July 2002, Statistics Canada found that 12.3% of Canadians (or more than 3 million Canadians) did not have access to a regular family doctor.
- The Alberta Government reports that "**Alberta is currently short 1,100 physicians** and this shortage is expected to increase to 1,800 by the year 2016". This shortage is further compounded by physician retirement and burnout:
  - In 2005, the average age of physicians in Canada was 48 years; 32 percent were 55 or older. The average age of retirement was 66.
  - In 2001, 65% of physicians surveyed by the CMA reported that their workload is heavier than they would like. Those who strongly agreed (32% of all physicians) averaged 60 hours per week plus over 30 hours on-call.
  - Responses to a 2003 CMA survey indicated that 46% of physicians appear to be in advanced stages of burnout.
- It is not known how many IMGs are living in Alberta and not practicing medicine. Based on AIMGA membership numbers, and the fact that hundreds of additional IMGs arrive in Canada every year, we can estimate that there are **over 1,000 non-practicing IMGs in Alberta**.
- Currently, about 28 percent of Alberta doctors are foreign graduates. **They represent a diversity of experience that is an invaluable asset in providing patient care.**
- Various studies in 2002 found that:
  - The majority of IMGs (60 percent) are in their prime working years, aged 30 to 45.
  - On average, IMGs have 9 years of clinical experience.
  - Before coming to Canada, 43% had practised medicine for 1–5 years and 46% had practised for 6–20 years.
  - Nearly half of the physicians were trained in general practice, and substantial numbers were trained in surgery, obstetrics, pediatrics or internal medicine.
  - The top 5 choices of clinical discipline in Canada were family medicine/ general practice (45.6%), internal medicine (14.9%), surgery (7.3%), obstetrics/gynecology (6.7%) and pediatrics (4.8%).
  - English is their principal language (96%). 80 percent speak another language fluently, which is a valuable resource in providing care for Alberta's growing immigrant population.
  - 54% had completed their medical degree in English.
- As much as half of the Alberta un-licensed IMGs are currently not employed at all; only a handful work in areas related to their medical training.
- Between 15 to 30 new IMG physicians join the numbers each year in Alberta.