



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Mr Ross Roberts-Thompson
President
Australian Medical Student's Association
Citi Centre Building
11 Hindmarsh Square
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Mr Roberts-Thompson

**Changes to the operation of s19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973
(Overseas Trained Doctors)**

I would like to advise you of changes to the operation of s19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973 that affect your members and those enrolled in your programs. These changes address a number of anomalies in the Health Insurance Act and streamline the operation of s19AB. Four amendments come into effect from 1 April 2010.

These amendments are:

1. The removal of the 10-year restriction (moratorium) on access to Medicare benefits for doctors who were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents at the time they enrolled in their primary medical degree at an Australian or New Zealand medical school (accredited by the Australian Medical Council) and doctors who were Australian citizens or permanent residents at the time they enrolled in their primary medical degree at a New Zealand medical school (accredited by the Australian Medical Council). These doctors will no longer be classified as "Overseas Trained Doctor" and "Former Overseas Medical Student" under the Health Insurance Act.
2. The moratorium for overseas trained doctors will now start from the time that overseas trained doctors and Former Overseas Medical Students (FOMS)/Foreign Graduates of an Accredited Medical School (FGAMS) obtain/ed their first medical registration in Australia, and finish 10 years later.
3. The term "Former Overseas Medical Student" (FOMS) will be changed to "Foreign Graduate of an Accredited Medical School" (FGAMS). This term refers to a person who is not a citizen or permanent resident of New Zealand or Australia at the time of enrolment at an Australian or New Zealand medical school (accredited by the Australian Medical Council).
4. The introduction of a 90-day appeal period for an applicant to apply for a review of a decision by which the Minister (or delegate) refused to grant an exemption under subsection 19AB (3).

Your members and those enrolled in your programs can obtain further information on the DoctorConnect and Department of Health and Ageing websites -
<http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/> <http://www.health.gov.au/>

This information will be available from the end of March.

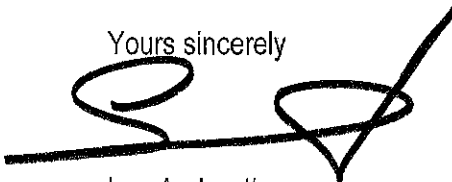
In addition, a letter will be sent in late March to New Zealand OTDs and Australians who trained in New Zealand. This letter will explain how these doctors can update their status with Medicare Australia. It is recognised that some of these doctors will now be subject to requirements under s19AA, and the department will have an interim program in place to ensure that these doctors' Medicare benefits are not unduly affected.

A letter will be sent to all overseas trained doctors in early April explaining the amendments and directing them to the DoctorConnect and department websites for further information.


Medicare Australia will also update the records of doctors affected by the change of the moratorium date.

Questions regarding these changes can be forwarded to doctorconnect@health.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Lou Andreatta
A/g First Assistant Secretary
Primary and Ambulatory Care Division



March 2010