Dermatology Training and Career Options in the U.K. for Indian Graduates

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There has been a recent surge of overseas trainees arriving in the U.K. and applying for clinical attachments. Most of these doctors have obtained the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (P.L.A.B.) certificate prior to seeking training posts. The General Medical Council (G.M.C.) offers limited registration to trainees after obtaining a suitable post. After successful completion of a year, they can be considered for full registration. To avoid disappointments in fulfilling one’s goals in career progression, a good understanding of the training system needs to be obtained before embarking on a difficult and often lengthy career path.

A. Higher Medical Training
Dermatology requires a minimum of four years (whole time equivalent) as a Specialist Registrar in a Dermatology Training Programme. These posts are awarded in competition which is often very strong. They are advertised in the British Medical Journal (BMJ). Successful completion of formal training (known as type 1 programme) will lead to the award of a Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST). Many overseas doctors will be employed as Visiting Specialist Registrars (VSpR) and will be engaged in training in either short programmes (known as type 2 programmes) that do not lead to a CCST or a type 1 programme where they are eligible. Obtaining the CCST makes them eligible to be placed on the Specialist Register and hence apply for Consultant posts.

B. Entry Requirements for Higher Medical Training
· Prior to entry into specialist training, all trainees are required to complete a minimum period of 2 years General Professional Training (GPT) in approved Senior House Officer (SHO) posts, including 6 months of acute unselected medical admissions. A period of similar training in India may be considered by the Joint Committee on Higher Medical Training (JCHMT) on an individual basis.
· MRCP (UK or Ireland). Most trainees in the U.K. or Ireland will have obtained this diploma during their 2 years of GPT. Applicants who do not hold the MRCP diploma must satisfy the appropriate higher training body i.e. the JCHMT, that their qualifications and experience are equivalent to those required of U.K. applicants. The following overseas qualifications in General Internal Medicine are currently recognised as equivalent to the MRCP for entry into specialist training:

| American Boards of Internal Medicine | FRACP Part 1 | MHKCP |
| American Boards of Internal Medicine | FCPS (Pakistan) | FCP (South Africa) |

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Aspiring trainees with other qualifications would be unwise to assume that their qualification is equivalent and should obtain the MRCP(UK) if they wish to train in the UK.

Further information on the JCHMT and specialist training in the UK may be found on: http://www.jchmt.org.uk

C. Changes in organisation of higher medical training

The above summarises the situation in 2004. However, it is important to know that there are major changes about to be introduced in the structure of medical posts and careers from the time of qualification onwards. These changes are being introduced in 2005-2006. After gaining a medical degree the pre-registration house job year and first Senior House Officer (SHO) year are being redesigned as two Foundation years. Following completion of the two foundation years doctors will compete for SHO 2-3 year rotations before becoming eligible to apply for SpR training posts.

D. Other Career Options In Sub-Consultant Grades

Dermatology Postgraduate Training in the UK currently requires a period of training of at least 7 years after gaining a medical degree. The period of training will be between 7 and 9 years after the above reorganisation takes place (details have yet to be finalized - some double counting of experience may be possible). Some overseas trainees may need to consider other options especially if they have arrived in the UK as mature graduates or have been unable to obtain, or who do not wish to sit the MRCP diploma. These non-training career grades include Hospital Practitioner grade and Staff Grade doctors who may progress to Associate Specialist after 4 years. Full registration with the GMC is required for Staff Grade and Associate Specialist doctors.
E. Career Paths at a Glance (Current Situation)
Pre-registration house officer post (one year) followed by...

F. Dermatology Diploma / Degree Courses for Dermatologists
MSc (CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY)
St. John’s Institute of Dermatology, London
A full-time course and lasts a full calendar year commencing every October. The course includes pharmacology, histopathology, infectious diseases, immunology, contact dermatitis, tropical diseases and photobiology. The course is designed mainly for overseas doctors wishing to take up dermatology as a career and who have three years postgraduate experience and within those three years a minimum of six months training in dermatology. There is a requirement for a dissertation. For further details:
E-mail: derm-courses@kcl.ac.uk
web: www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/medicine/dermatology/index.html

Diploma in Dermatological Sciences and MSC in Dermatology
Department of Dermatology, Cardiff University, Cardiff.
The Diploma in Dermatological Sciences is a structured programme designed for doctors who wish to specialise in dermatology. The course gives firm grounding in the fundamentals of clinical and scientific dermatology. New modules in surgical and cosmetic dermatology have recently been added to the curriculum.

The full-time course covers a complete academic year commencing in October each year. Examinations held at the end of the course lead to the Diploma in Dermatological Sciences. After the successful completion of the Diploma course, students are eligible for progression to the MSc Degree. The duration of the MSc course extension is from July – November (a total of five months) and consists of taught and dissertation elements. For further details:
E-mail: dermpostgrad@cf.ac.uk

DIPLOMA IN DERMATOLOGY EXAMINATION
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.
This examination is held twice yearly, usually in March and October. To be eligible to sit the examinations, satisfactory evidence of the following must be provided:

- Having graduated in medicine 18 months or more previously
- And have fulfilled one of the following conditions:
  - Having held a recent full-time post for 6 months (or equivalent part-time) in a specialist department of dermatology
  - Having recently been employed in a specialist department of dermatology in a clinical capacity for at least two sessions weekly for two years, or equivalent experience over a shorter/longer period
  - Attendance with clinical instruction at a specialist department of dermatology for a period of six months full time or equivalent part-time.

For further details:
E-mail: exam.office@rcpsglasg.ac.uk

G. Dermatology Diploma Courses For General Practitioners
Diploma In Practical Dermatology
This is a 30 week international e-learning distance course organised by the Department of Dermatology, Cardiff University. This is a highly interactive web-based course aimed at improving the knowledge of GPs concerning dermatology in practice. For further details:
E-mail: dermpostgrad@cf.ac.uk
web: www.ukdermatology.co.uk

DIPLOMA IN CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY
This is a 30 week distance learning course with clinical training days in London aimed at improving the knowledge of GPs concerning dermatology in practice.
KEY POINTS

- 2 years of GPT, MRCP and 4 years of Higher Medical Training will lead to award of CCST, which allows entry to the Specialist Register (GMC)
- Being on the GMC Specialist Register as a Dermatologist is necessary to apply for Consultant posts
- Check with the JCHMT that you have equivalent experience and qualification for entry into Specialist Training
- Obtaining the PLAB qualification does not guarantee a training post
- Training posts are obtained in competition with UK and European Union – graduates
- All SHO and Specialist Registrar posts are advertised in the BMJ
- Further options in non-consultant career grades are available
- Excellent Diploma and Degree courses are available for overseas doctors wishing to return after a period in the U.K.

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