

# General Practitioners: Specialists in General Practice

*Joint statement, September 2019*

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), the British Medical Association (BMA) and the General Medical Council (GMC) recognise that GPs are expert medical generalists, and as such are specialists in general practice.

To practice as a GP, UK graduates must complete a minimum of three years General Practitioner Specialty Training (GPST) on a GMC approved programme, pass the Membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP) assessments and gain a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT). Assurance processes are in place to ensure doctors who move to the UK from abroad, or demonstrate equivalent knowledge, skills and experience, also meet these high standards.

In 2007, GP Specialty Training was formally introduced in the UK, which replaced previous models of training. This followed the revision of the criteria within the regulatory framework of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board for approval of specialist training in general practice.

GP Specialty Training is an intellectually rigorous medical training programme, which enables doctors to gain the skills and experience required to make a huge and vital contribution to healthcare in the UK, providing expert care and treatment to millions of patients.

GPs are not currently legally recognised as specialists in the UK once they have qualified, due to the existence of two separate GMC registers for senior doctors. The RCGP and BMA continue to call for this to change, as outlined below, which the GMC supports.

## Merging the medical registers

Since 2006 the 'GP Register' and (since 1997) the 'Specialist Register' have been in place to provide assurance to patients, employers and the profession that a doctor has achieved the standards, knowledge and skills required to practise safely at a senior level.

However, as the RCGP and BMA have set out for some years, a single advanced medical register for senior doctors that recognises them as specialists would simplify the structure of these assurances and make this expertise much clearer. Such a change would support the GMC's work to make the entire medical register more helpful and informative for the millions of patients, employers and doctors who use it every year, as well as future applicants to medical specialty training, including general practice.

Most countries within Europe already legally recognise general practice as a specialty. Creating a single advanced medical register in the UK by expanding the Specialist Register to include general practice requires the UK Parliament to amend the Medical Act – the decision to make such a change rests with the four UK governments.

The RCGP and BMA therefore continue to call for the Medical Act to be changed at the earliest opportunity. The GMC supports these proposals.