

**Health Professions Council  
of South Africa  
Medical and Dental  
Professions Board**

**Board Examination for  
Foreign Medical  
Practitioners wishing to  
practice in SA**

**Scope and guidelines of the  
examinations**

# 1. The examination

## 1.1 Scope of the examination

### 1.1.1 Clinical knowledge and skills

Resources:

- i. A Dhai and D McQuoid-Mason. Bioethics, Human Rights and Health Law Principles and Practice, 2011;
- ii. B Mash, and J Blitz-Lindeque, SA Family Practice Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Ed; (2010)
- iii. B Mash, Handbook of Family Medicine (Oxford Handbook), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed; (2006)
- iv. Standard Treatment Guidelines and Essential Drugs List
- v. South African Department of Health guidelines
- vi. Merck Manual of Medical Library

The written and practical examinations cover the common basic science, general signs, symptoms, management and skills related to the following conditions as is appropriate in the South African District Health System: **(What follows serves only as a guideline and questions outside these topics are possible):**

#### **Child health:**

- Fever
- Diarrhoeal disease
- Respiratory illness: Lower and upper respiratory infections
- Resuscitation of the new-born
- Meningitis
- Convulsions
- Malnutrition
- HIV and AIDS
- Common childhood infections: measles, rubella etc.
- Child abuse
- Preventive care: GOBIFFF (Growth monitoring, oral re-hydration, breast-feeding, immunisation, female education, family planning, feeding)

#### **Maternal Health:**

- Normal pregnancy and delivery
- Abnormal pregnancy and delivery
- Hypertension in pregnancy
- Ante-partum haemorrhage
- Obstructed labour
- Post-partum haemorrhage
- Contraception
- Abnormal menstruation
- Ectopic pregnancy

#### **Infectious Diseases:**

- Tuberculosis
- Malaria
- Meningitis
- Sexually transmitted illnesses
- HIV

- AIDS

### **Emergency and trauma:**

- Basic CPR
- Endo-tracheal Intubation
- Assessment and early management of injuries and fractures
- Sexual abuse

### **Chronic Illnesses:**

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Asthma
- Coronary Heart Disease
- AIDS

### **Mental Health:**

- Assessment of mental health
- Substance abuse
- Acute psychosis
- Depression
- Other acute mental illnesses

### **Family Health:**

- Dysfunctional families: prevention and management

### **Other acute illnesses:**

- Appendicitis
- Acute abdomen
- Acute mental illness
- Pneumonia
- Coma

### **ENT:**

- Upper Respiratory Tract Infection
- Otitis Media
- Tonsillitis
- Sinusitis
- Epistaxis

### **Eyes:**

- Common infections and allergies
- Red eye
- Eye injuries
- Refraction problems
- Glaucoma

### **Dermatology**

- Common skin conditions in primary health care

### **Other issues:**

- Consultation and communication skills
- Basic counselling skills such as for rape or other serious trauma, bad news, domestic violence, pre and post HIV testing, etc
- Primary health care approach
- District health system

- Teamwork
- Functional Referrals
- Management of resources
- Promotion, Prevention, Curative, Rehabilitation and Palliative Care

## 1.2 Ethical rules and legal issues

The following are required to be known for the purposes of examination:

Booklets in the Series 'Guidelines for good and ethical practice in medicine, dentistry and the medical sciences'. Medical and Dental Professions Board of the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Pretoria.

- Booklet 1: General ethical guidelines for doctors, dentists and medical scientists.
- Booklet 2: General ethical guidelines for health researchers.
- Booklet 3: Ethical and professional rules of the Medical and Dental Professions Board.
- Booklet 4: Professional self-development.
- Booklet 5: Guidelines for making professional services known.
- Booklet 6: Guidelines for the management of health care waste.
- Booklet 7: Policy statements on perverse incentives.
- Booklet 8: Guidelines for the management of patients with HIV infection or AIDS.
- Booklet 9: Guidelines on research and clinical trials involving human subjects.
- Booklet 10: Research, development and use of the chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities of the State.
- Booklet 11: Guidelines on keeping patient records.
- Booklet 12: Canvassing of patients abroad.
- Booklet 13: National Patients' Rights Charter.
- Booklet 14: Confidentiality: Protecting and providing information.
- Booklet 15: Seeking patients' consent: The ethical considerations.
- Booklet 16: Guidelines for the withholding and withdrawing of treatment

The World Medical Association Medical Ethics Manual ISBN 92-990028-1-9

### **Health Professions Act: No 56 of 1974**

Section 3: Objects of Council

Section 4: General Powers of Council

Section 36: Offences by unregistered persons

Section 56: Death under anaesthetic

Ethical Rules for the Conduct of Practitioners Registered Under the Health Professions Act – No R.717 (Government Gazette – 4 August 2006)

## **Mental Health Care Act No 17 of 2002:**

Chapter 5: Voluntary, Assisted and Involuntary Mental Health Care

## **Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act**

Preamble

Section 5: Consent

Section 10: Offences and penalties

## **Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act: No 130 of 1993:**

Purpose of Act (Bold typing in the middle of first page.)

## **Occupational Health and Safety Act: No 85 of 1993**

Purpose of the act (Bold on first page.)

## **Children's Act 2005**

## **National Health Act No 61 of 2003:**

## **Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa – Act No 108 of 1996.**

### **1.3 Components of the exam**

#### **1.3.1 The written examination**

##### *1.3.1.1 Length and format*

The written examination is a Multiple Choice examination. (Single best answers) There is **no negative** marking. It has two components. The first component consists of **75 items** assessing clinical knowledge, and the second component consists of **25 items** testing ethical and legal knowledge. The test is set in English. Examination time is **two hours**.

##### *1.3.1.2 Making the results known*

The results may be obtained one week following the exam either by phoning HPCSA, or by referring to the web page <http://www.hpcs.co.za/hpcs/medical> and dental professions board

The candidates will be informed of the outcome of the written as deciles. Specific marks will not be available.

### **Successful candidates will be informed of the practical exam dates through the HPCSA.**

#### **1.3.2 Practical examination**

##### *1.3.2.1 Length and format*

Clinical knowledge, application, practice and skills are assessed using a practical examination, which consists of stations which follow the commonly used formats of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)/ Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE). It consists of a minimum of **13 stations of at least 7 minutes each**. The stations assess a sample of clinical skills needed to function as a medical practitioner in the public health service in South Africa.. Some stations are done with the examiner present ("manned"), while others may be answered on paper ("unmanned").

Examples of manned stations include but are not limited to:

- Conducting consultations, covering common acute complaints such as sore throat, earache, headache, and common chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension, epilepsy, psychiatric illness etc;
- Conducting an ante-natal consultation,

- counselling a patient regarding issues such as HIV/AIDS, assault, bad news;
- performing certain examination and/or procedural skills such as examination of particular joints, examination of the eye, taking the blood pressure, instructing a patient in the use of a meter dose inhaler, assessing peak expiratory flow rate;
- performing mental health status assessment,
- performing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, endo-tracheal intubation, or other emergency procedures, etc.

Examples of unmanned stations include, but are not limited to:

- writing a prescription,
- discovering errors in a specimen prescription,
- reading an X-ray, ECG or other laboratory investigation
- assessing Road-to-health charts,
- answering questions on immunisation,
- Filling a partogram
- identifying skin or genital lesions
- examining a urine specimen with some related questions, etc.

### *Making the results known*

The results should be obtained **approx. 2 weeks** following the exam either by phoning HPCSA, or by referring to the web page <http://www.hpcsa.co.za/hpcsa/medical> and dental professions board. The candidates will be informed of the outcome of the written as deciles. Specific marks will not be available. If they have been unsuccessful, they are also given their status in regard to future attempts.

Where a candidate wants to know in which areas s/he needs to concentrate in the future, the HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator may refer them to the practical exam co-ordinator, who will tell them which Practical stations they did not pass.

**Note: The HPCSA's Exams Committee Co-ordinator is not sent the detailed mark sheets of the Practical examination showing the details of the marks for each station.**

## **1.4.1 Disciplinary measures and procedures**

### *1.4.1.1 Written exam*

Any irregularities, or conduct construed as dishonest, is dealt with by the invigilators during the exam (according to the standard university regulations), and reported to the authorities for action.

### *1.4.1.2 Practical exam*

Any irregularities or conduct construed as dishonest during the practical examination that is noticed by any examiner, moderator or administrative assistant will be reported immediately to the authorities for action.

## **1.5.1 GUIDELINES FOR BOARD EXAMINATION FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS**

### **1. Each attempt at the board examination consists of**

#### **a. Theory section (MCQ)**

Has two parts: A Medical section and an ethics section

The overall pass rate shall be 50% percent for the theory section with a subminimum of 45% each for medical section and ethics section. If the ethics examination is conducted separately it shall be valid for the period indicated.

**b. Practical section (OSCE)**

- i. Should the candidate pass the theory section, the candidate qualifies for the practical section. **Two opportunities** shall be offered to the candidate for the practical section. The second opportunity at the practical section should be **within one year** after the first opportunity;
- ii. one attempt is thus **one opportunity at theory** section followed by **two opportunities at the practical** section.

**c. Number of attempts**

- i. The candidate shall be offered three attempts in total to be successful at the board exam.
- ii. A further attempt shall be considered at the discretion of the Board after submitting proof of appropriate remediation provided by educational institutions accredited for training of medical practitioners/medical students. It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain the appropriate remedial training.
- iii. Board examination shall be conducted twice a year, **May/June** and **October/November**.