

Governance Structure of Network of Medical Councils in SEAR Countries

Preamble

Medical Councils play an important role in the development and promotion of quality medical education in their respective countries. They are responsible for maintaining standards of medical education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels for defining and ensuring minimum professional standards for medical practice. All these actions are taken with the ultimate objective of safeguarding and protecting the health of the population.

Worldwide, the role of medical councils has been rapidly evolving over time in alignment with dynamic changes in the society as well as the medical profession. Consumers are entitled to high quality and better services, which requires a high degree of professionalism adhering to stringent ethical standards.

While several countries in the South-East Asia Region have well developed and fully functional medical councils, the medical councils of some countries are in different stages of development. Some countries of the Region are yet to establish medical councils.

Scope of network

Realizing the need to strengthen Medical Councils in the South-East Asia Region to meet the fast evolving challenges of the twenty-first century. In February 2007, the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) established the Regional Network of Medical Councils of the SEA Region. This was in response to a request made by representatives of Medical Councils of the SEA Region who gathered in Thimpu, Bhutan in October 2006. WHO-SEARO was identified as the secretariat of the network for the first two years of its operation. At the second meeting of the network in November 2008 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the responsibility of the secretariat to facilitate the next three years of operation was transferred to Nepal Medical Council.

Vision

All countries in the SEA Region will have fully functional medical councils in order to ensure that the health-care seekers in the respective countries are provided equitable health care with professionalism of the highest order by members of the medical profession.

Mission

The network shall provide a pedestal for information sharing among member medical councils of the SEA Region, facilitating proactive coordination, cooperation and collaboration among member councils.

Objectives:

1. **To establish** close collaboration and mutual exchange of information between medical councils of the SEA Region countries.
2. **To assist member councils to adopt** beneficial practices to function **efficiently and effectively**.
3. **To strengthen** the standard of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing medical education.
4. **To assist member councils to develop and establish strategies** for improving standards of professionalism in accordance with their needs.
5. **To establish close relationships** with other international organizations committed to improving professional standards among medical practitioners.

Network structure

Executive Committee

The executive committee of the Network of Medical Councils of SEA Regional is established in order to steer and oversee that the activities of the network are designed and implemented to benefit medical councils of the Region. The committee will be inclusive, nonbureaucratic and flexible. The members of the committee are those who are working with medical councils and WHO and those with vision to improve the functioning of medical councils in the Region. They

would be enthusiastic and would be proactively involved in the process of identifying strategies to facilitate needs-based activities of the network.

The network will work with other partners from time to time. The executive committee consists of a President and the Secretary of the Secretariat and one member from each council for a term of three years, and the quorum for such a meeting is to be five members. One person from WHO-SEARO who is at the director level will be permanently invited to facilitate the functioning of the network.

Powers and duties

The Executive Committee is established to support continued activities of the secretariat. They are expected to be in close contact with other committee members. The Committee will meet on a regular basis (biannually or quarterly) via teleconference and face to face at least once a year. The face-to-face meeting will be organized back to back with the annual network meeting. And the Executive Committee should submit progress reports biannually.

Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Medical Council that hosts the Secretariat will be nominated as the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. He/she is responsible for guiding the committee members, Secretariat, and country focal points to achieve the objectives of the network.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is the administrative arm of the network. It is responsible for facilitating the functioning of the Executive Committee and initiating and monitoring the network activities identified by Member States. It will coordinate and provide assistance to coordinate intercountry activities.

Composition

The Secretariat will at least consist of the Coordinator, who is the Registrar/Secretary of the host Medical Council, a part-time technical officer and a full-time secretarial staff. To facilitate efficient work, two to three staff will be recruited on a full-time/part-time basis by the Secretariat.

The skill mix will depend on the needs of the host Medical Council. Their remuneration will be paid by the Secretariat as approved by the Executive Committee.

Operation

The Secretariat will be rotated every three years among Member States according to the names of the countries in alphabetical order, starting from Nepal. If the country is not ready to host, then the chance will be given to the next country accordingly.

Network coordinator

The Registrar or an official nominated by the Chairperson of the host Medical Council Network will function as the Coordinator of the network Secretariat. He will be responsible for coordination between the Steering Committee, country focal points, technical agencies and partners and to facilitate the implementation of the activities that are identified in the network workplan.

Secretariat staff

The secretariat staff will be selected by the Coordinator of the Secretariat adhering to the policies and procedures approved by the Executive Committee.

Duties of the secretariat

- Develop the annual work plan and the budget;
- coordinate activities as specified in the approved workplan;
- prepare meeting agendas, materials and relevant documents;
- coordinate with the focal points in Member States for network activities;
- regularly maintain the network website;
- disseminate documents approved by the Steering Committee among countries and partners;

- coordinate multicountry activities;
- mobilize technical assistance to member medical councils;
- provide logistical support to the Steering Committee meetings;
- organize the annual network meeting.

Member States of the SEAR Regional Network of Medical Councils

Composition

All medical councils of the SEA Region and/or any other professional councils that function as the medical council of a specific country will be members of the network. In the current context, medical or such professional councils of all 11 WHO SEA Region countries will form the membership of the network.

Other partners

The network Secretariat will take steps to collaborate with other national and international partners who have a mandate to develop professional standards of medical practice. The possibility of learning from fellow medical councils of other regions also will be explored.

Financing

The network members will explore all possibilities to seek financial resources to make the network Secretariat sustainable. WHO-SEARO and the Country Office have assured their technical and financial assistance. A membership fee will be charged, the sum of which will be reviewed from time to time by the networking committee. The duration will be for three years and the charge will be decided by the Executive Committee.

Auditing

Internal auditing will be done according to the practice of the host medical council every year and the report will be presented at the annual meeting. A final audit will be done before transferring the Secretariat to another medical council.

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