Immigration Overview

International Medical Graduates in U.S. Graduate Medical Education
“IMG” Definition

An **International Medical Graduate** (IMG) is any physician who received his/her basic medical degree or qualification from a medical school outside of the U.S. or Canada, regardless of citizenship.

- This includes any U.S. citizen who received a medical degree from a school outside of the U.S. or Canada.
IMGs and Entry into U.S. GME

1. Complete ECFMG Certification
   - Meet examination and credentialing requirements

2. Apply for U.S. Residency Training Position
   - Apply to ERAS
   - Interview with programs
   - Register with the NRMP Match
   - Secure a contract/letter of offer

3. If Foreign National, Obtain the Appropriate Visa/Visa Status for U.S. Residency Training
ECFMG (1956-2006)

Private, Non-profit Organization

Organizational Members

- American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
- Association for Hospital Medical Education (AHME)
- Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, Inc (FSMB)
- National Medical Association (NMA)
ECFMG Services

- ECFMG Certification
- Certification Verification Service (CVS)
- Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS®)
- J-1 Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP)
ECFMG Certification
ECFMG Certification

ECFMG Certification assures residency program directors and the U.S. public that the international medical graduate (IMG) has met minimum standards to enter U.S. residency programs.

**ECFMG Certification is required for:**

- IMG entry into ACGME-accredited GME
- Taking USMLE Step 3
- Unrestricted state licensure
- Visa sponsorship
Two Components of Requirements for ECFMG Certification

ECFMG Certification Requirements Consist of:

- Medical Education Credentials
- Medical Examinations
Medical Education Credential
Requirements for ECFMG Certification

- Completion of a medical school curriculum of at least **four academic years**

- Medical school, graduation year must be listed in *International Medical Education Directory (IMED)* See [http://IMED.ecfmg.org](http://IMED.ecfmg.org)

- Documented completion of all requirements for and receipt of **final medical diploma**

- **Primary source verification** of medical diploma and **transcript** by ECFMG
## Examination Requirements for ECFMG Certification

**Prior Requirements**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Requirements*</th>
<th>Current Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>USMLE™ Step 1 Basic Science</td>
<td>USMLE Step 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>USMLE Step 2 Clinical Science</td>
<td>USMLE Step 2 CK Clinical Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECFMG Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA®)</td>
<td>USMLE Step 2 CS Clinical Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>English language proficiency test (TOEFL®)</td>
<td>USMLE Step 2 CS has a distinct, separately scored spoken English proficiency subcomponent</td>
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*An ECFMG Certificate may be based on previously-administered examinations.*
ECFMG Certification Resources

- General Certification Information @
  http://www.ecfmg.org/cert/index.html

- ECFMG Certification Fact Sheet @
  http://www.ecfmg.org/cert/certfact.html

- Permanent Validation Sticker
  - Form 246:  http://www.ecfmg.org/cert/permvald.pdf

- E-Newsletter:  The ECFMG Reporter
ECFMG’s Certification Verification Service (CVS) provides primary source confirmation of an IMG’s ECFMG certification status to residency programs, state medical boards and other organizations, such as hospitals and HMOs

- Satisfies JCAHO requirement for primary-source verification of IMG’s medical school completion
- No charge for GME programs
CVS Online

- Web-based requests for confirmation of ECFMG Certification status
- Confirmations sent via postal mail
- Establish an account for your program by sending e-mail to cvsonline@ecfmg.org
- http://www.ecfmg.org/cvs
Applying for a U.S. Residency Training Position
Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS)

- Developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to facilitate applications to residency/fellowship programs

- ECFMG serves as the dean’s office for all IMGs and transmits supporting documents to program directors through the Internet (letters of recommendation, MSPEs, transcripts, etc.)
Securing a GME Contract
Standard Timeline

- Review residency applications – *ERAS*
- Interview (U.S. or conference call) – *Fall*
- Resident selection (Pre-match contract offers or rank order for the NRMP/“Match”) – *February*
- Match results – *Mid-March*
- State Licensure – *April-June*
- Orientation/Training Start – *June-July 1*
Obtain the Appropriate Visa / Visa Status for U.S. Residency Training
Who Needs a Visa?

All *foreign national* physicians need appropriate visas to participate in U.S. graduate medical education (GME).

*Foreign nationals* = individuals who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents

- A foreign national physician may be a U.S. medical school graduate or an IMG.
- All IMGs, regardless of citizenship, must be ECFMG Certified to enter U.S. GME, but not all IMGs need visas.
Immigration Terms

- "Visa" - A permit granted for entry into the U.S., stamped or affixed in the passport; expiration date applies to timetable for entry only, can expire once in the U.S.

- **U.S. Consulate** – Branch of U.S. Embassy, located outside the U.S., operates under the U.S. Department of State; responsible for visa issuance (personal interview, security clearances, issuing visa stamp, etc.)
Immigration Terms

- **“Visa Status”** – Immigration classification that reflects the authorized activity and timeframe for U.S. stay (i.e. “B-1 status” for tourist/visitor, “J-1 status” for exchange visitor physician, “H-1B status” for specialty worker/physician); authorized stay may be limited to specific date or issued for “duration of stay” while participating in the approved activity.

- **U.S. Customs and Border Protection - (USCBP)**
Immigration Terms

“U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS)”
- Formerly “I.N.S.”, agency of DHS, primarily operates in field offices in the U.S.; responsible for processing immigrant and non-immigrant benefit petitions, including “change of visa status” (i.e., B-1 tourist/visitor to J-1 or H-1B physician)
Visas Options for Foreign National Physicians in GME

- J-1 “Alien Physician” (ECFMG sponsored)
- H1-B “Specialty Occupation Worker”
- J-2 “Dependent” (Spouse of J-1 principal)
- F-1 “Student” (1 year Optional Practical Training)
- O-1 of “Extraordinary Merit” (International Renown)
- Other - Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
Visa Considerations

Which visa is the most appropriate for the foreign national physician training in your program?

- Institutional policies
- Employer responsibilities/liabilities
- Administration - centralized/decentralized
- Program recruitment strategy
- Exceptional circumstances
- Budget/fees
- Attorney selection
- IMG’s current/past immigration history
- IMG’s goals/plans/family
# Most Common Visa Types for IMGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th><strong>H-1</strong></th>
<th><strong>J-1</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regulatory Oversight</strong></td>
<td>Departments of Labor &amp; Homeland Security</td>
<td>Departments of State &amp; Homeland Security, ECFMG</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Examinations</strong></td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS, 3</td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time Limit</strong></td>
<td>6 years maximum</td>
<td>7 years maximum</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>U.S. employer salary only</td>
<td>Multiple sources acceptable</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>212(e)&amp; 214(b)</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EAD for Spouse</strong></td>
<td>No, no work permit for H-4</td>
<td>Yes, J-2 can apply for work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Processing Time/ Fees</strong></td>
<td>From $ 1,500 - $6,000+ (attorneys, family, etc.)</td>
<td>$300 (ECFMG+SEVIS)</td>
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J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa

Temporary, non-immigrant classification

Requires evidence of strong ties to the home country and intent to return - *INA §214(b)*

Full-time participation in an approved clinical GME *training* program - *not employment*

Duration limited to 7 years progressive training

Automatically subject to 2 year home rule - *INA §212(e)*

Tracked in **SEVIS** (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System)
What is “SEVIS” 
**Student and Exchange Visitor Information System**

- Data exchange with DHS/DOS
- Tracks immigration activities of all non-immigrant students and exchange visitors (J, F, and M visa holders and dependents)
- Accessed by Consulates, Embassies, ports-of-entry and other DHS agencies
- ECFMG creates and updates SEVIS records for J-1 “alien physicians”, issues Form DS-2019
Non Immigrant Intent

INA §214(e)

- J-1/J-2 must demonstrate sufficient ties to one’s home country and intent to return by evidencing such intent (family, past and future employment, property, etc.)

- U.S. Consular official has considerable discretion in determining whether the J-1/J-2 applicant satisfies this requirement
Two-year Home Residency Requirement

INA § 212(e)

- Upon completion of training, J-1 physicians are obligated to reside in their home country for at least two years before being eligible for certain changes or adjustments in U.S. visa status (H-1, green card)

- 212(e) Waiver – Legal options exist for J-1 physicians to remain in the U.S. after training, the most common of which is employment in a medically underserved area (MUA) or Health Professions Shortage Area (HPSA)
H-1B Visa

- Temporary worker in a specialty occupation
- Six year maximum
- Sponsored and salaried by employer
- Employer must submit a Labor Condition Application (LCA) to U.S. Department of Labor and H-1B Petition to USCIS
- Employer is responsible for certain fees (initial filing, anti-fraud, etc.); some fees may be paid in part by the foreign national
- Eligible to apply for permanent resident status
Immigration Steps

1. Determine most appropriate visa classification for physician and program

2. Program applies for visa documentation from either ECFMG for J-1 or USCIS/DOL for H-1B

3. Physician applies for a “visa” at a U.S. Consulate abroad
   ✓ Requires a personal interview and security clearance
Immigration Steps

4. Physician travels to the U.S., “visa status” is granted at the port-of-entry (J-1 or H-1B Status)
   ✓ If in U.S. in alternate “visa status,” physician applies for a change of status through USCIS (i.e., B-1 to J-1)

5. Physician reports to program with I-94 Arrival Record confirming valid “visa status” (J-1 or H-1B Status)

6. For J-1s, program reports physician’s arrival to ECFMG, ECFMG validates physician’s SEVIS record
Immigration Steps

7. Ten days after entering the U.S., physician may apply for a Social Security Number

8. Physician begins residency training in approved program

9. Program reports any change of program plan to ECFMG or DOL/USCIS, as required

10. Program and physician share responsibilities to maintain valid status (renew on time, comply with immigration laws, etc.)
Common Questions

- Can a physician begin to train once ECFMG approves J-1 sponsorship and issues the Form DS-2019?

- Does the visa need to be renewed annually?

- How often does J-1 sponsorship or H-1B petition need to be renewed?

- Can a physician travel abroad while in training?

- Can a J-1 physician convert to H-1B after passing USMLE Step 3?
EVSP Resources Review

- **EVSP Homepage** @ http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/index.html for access to:
  - EVSP *Reference Guide*
  - EVSP *Fact Sheet*
  - Application Materials
  - Updates and Memoranda

- **U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program** @ http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges

- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** @ www.uscis.gov

- **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** @ www.dhs.gov/dhspublic
Questions?

Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program

Tel: (215) 823-2121
Fax: (215) 386-9766