Association for Residency Coordinators in Surgery

IMGs: Academic and Immigration Requirements

April 12, 2007
Eleanor M. Fitzpatrick, MA
Entry into U.S. GME
Foreign National Physicians and IMGs

• Complete ECFMG Certification (*if IMG*)
  – Take appropriate examinations
  – Meet credentialing requirements
• Apply for U.S. Residency Training Position
  – Apply to ERAS
  – Interview with programs
  – Enroll in the NRMP Match
  – Secure a contract/letter of offer
• Seek Appropriate U.S. Training Visa / Status
  (*if foreign national physician*)
Pre-Screening IMGs

1. Medical Credentials
2. Immigration History
3. Professional Goals
4. Personal Considerations
1. Medical Credentials

- Valid ECFMG Certificate
- Valid Medical Examinations
  - For GME and Licensure
- Prerequisite Training
ECFMG Certification

1. Verified Medical Education Credentials
   • Transcripts and Diploma
2. Passing Examinations
   • USMLE (or other previously accepted exams)

Official Source
ECFMG® Certification Status Report - ERAS,CVS
Valid Medical Examinations

- Exam Type (USMLE, FLEX, FMGEMS)
- Dates Administered
- Number of Attempts
- Exam Scores
- Licensure Requirement for Position

Official Source
USMLE Transcript, State Medical License
## ECFMG Certification/Exam Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Requirements*</th>
<th>Current Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USMLE Step 1 Basic Science</td>
<td>USMLE Step 1 Basic Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USMLE Step 2 Clinical Science</td>
<td>USMLE Step 2 CK Clinical Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECFMG Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA)</td>
<td>USMLE Step 2 CS Clinical Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language proficiency test (TOEFL)</td>
<td>Spoken English Proficiency (SEP) is part of the USMLE Step 2 CS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A valid ECFMG Certificate may be based on previously-administered examinations.*
Prerequisite Training

- Residency Training U.S. or Abroad
- Preliminary or Categorical
- Board Credit
- Change in Specialty
- Research
- Observership

Best Sources
Institution, Specialty Board, ECFMG, Physician
2. Immigration History

- Visa Status – Current and Previous
- Type/s of Activity
- Length/s of Stay
- Consistent Birth, Citizenship, LPR countries
- Subject to the Return Home Obligation INA §212(e)
- Restrictions in current status
- Portability (*if transferring*)
- Dependents

---

**Best Sources**

ERAS Applicant Profile, US sponsoring Institution, employer, Form DS-2019, Form I 717, Form I-20, I-94 Record, Passport, CV
Immigration Terms

• “Visa” - A permit granted for entry into the U.S., stamp in the passport; expiration date applies to timetable for entry only, can expire once in the U.S.

• “Visa Status” – Immigration classification which 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.
3. Professional Goals

- Recent Graduate and First-time Resident
- Retraining in U.S.
- Desire to Live/Work in Primary Care in the U.S.
- Changing Specialty to Obtain a GME Contract
- Expects Credit for Previous International Training
- Plans Career in Research
- Intends to Return Home after U.S. Training

Best Sources
CV, Training History, ERAS Applications, Communicate with the Physician
4. Personal Considerations

- Dependents/Family in the U.S. or Abroad
- Family’s Immigration Status
- Spouse’s Profession
- Special needs/requests
- Personal/outside Funding

Best Source
Communicate with Physician
Effective Pre-screening of IMGs

• Who should ask what, when, why?

Best Practices
– Standardize institutional/program policies
– Ensure accuracy in gathering/evaluating facts
– Develop effective communication
# Most Common Visa Types for Clinical Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H-1</th>
<th>J-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulatory Oversight</strong></td>
<td>Departments of Labor &amp; Homeland Security</td>
<td>Departments of State &amp; Homeland Security, ECFMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examinations</strong></td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS,3</td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Limit</strong></td>
<td>6 years maximum</td>
<td>7 years maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>U.S. employer salary only</td>
<td>Multiple sources acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>212(e)&amp; 214(b)</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<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 authorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processing Time/Fees</strong></td>
<td>$1,500 - $6,000+ (attorneys, family etc.) Service Ctr./Consulate</td>
<td>$300 (ECFMG+SEVIS) 4-6 weeks at ECFMG + Service Ctr/Consulate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Common Visa Types for Clinical Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>J-2 in GME</th>
<th>F-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulatory Oversight</strong></td>
<td>Departments of State &amp; Homeland Security, ECFMG</td>
<td>Departments of State &amp; Homeland Security, U.S. Medical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examinations</strong></td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</td>
<td>USMLE Steps 1, 2CK, 2CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Limit</strong></td>
<td>Tied to J-1 principle</td>
<td>1 year maximum on OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>U.S. employer salary only</td>
<td>Multiple sources acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>212(e)&amp; 214(b)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processing Time/Fees</strong></td>
<td>2-5 months $180, with possible increase</td>
<td>2-5 months $180, with possible increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMGs and Required Reporting

- Arrival / Delays / No show
- Any Change in the Approved Training
  - Remediation
  - Leave of absence/maternity leave
  - Licensure delays
  - Proposed off-site rotations
  - Proposed early advancements
  - Resignation
  - Contract termination
  - Legal Allegations
  - Grievance Process
IMGs and International Travel

• Consider the Time and the Risk:
  If the IMG resident departs the U.S. with an expired visa stamp in the passport, visa renewal will be required to re-enter. The visa application process may involve lengthy security clearances, etc. and visa issuance/renewal cannot be guaranteed.

• If the IMG resident **MUST** Travel:
  – Discuss contract conditions - delay, failure to return, etc.
  – Refer to [www.state.gov/travel](http://www.state.gov/travel)
  – J-1s should contact ECFMG and refer to: [http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/travel.html](http://www.ecfmg.org/evsp/travel.html)
J-1 Visa Sponsorship Process

1. TPL and Physician Complete Application, Submit to ECFMG

2. ECFMG Regional Advisor Evaluates Application
   - TPL is notified of application deficiencies
   - If all requirements are met, application is approved
     - Electronic SEVIS record is created
     - SEVIS Form DS-2019 is issued

3. SEVIS Form DS-2019 is mailed to TPL
   - TPL makes copy for hospital records
   - TPL forwards SEVIS Form DS-2019 to the physician
4. Physician Applies for J-1 Visa Status

- U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad, or USCIS Regional Service Center in the U.S.
- Requires electronic SEVIS Record and Form DS-2019

For detailed instructions see:

Option 1: Apply at U.S. Embassy or Consulate Abroad
http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/obtainingvisa/index.html

Option 2: Apply for Change of Visa Status in the U.S.
http://www.uscis.gov
5. J-1 Physician Reports for Training
   - The foreign national physician must present the TPL with evidence of approved *J-1 visa status* in order to begin the GME program. Documentation includes:
     - J-1 Visa Stamp in Passport
     - J-1 D/S (Duration of Status) on I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

6. TPL Must Report Arrival / Delay to ECFMG within Thirty Days of the Training Start Date
   - Failure to report *inactivates* the SEVIS record
Continuation of
J-1 Visa Sponsorship

1. ECFMG continued sponsorship is tied to progression in a full-time GME program as evidenced by a contract (usually offered on an annual basis)
2. ECFMG requires four to six week processing time
3. Sponsorship renewal must be approved prior to expiration of current training date on SEVIS Form DS-2019
4. Renewal of an expired J-1 visa stamp in the passport is NOT required to remain the U.S.
Special Case Types

Non-standard Programs
Advanced clinical subspecialty disciplines for which neither ACGME-accreditation nor ABMS-certification is available; independent subspecialty fellowship program operating in direct association with an ACGME-accredited parent program

Department of State Petitions
Changes in J-1 category, extensions beyond seven years, reinstatements, miscellaneous special petitions/advisories

Extensions to Sit for an ABMS-member Board Examination
Program Completion

30 Day Grace Period

- USCIS grants a 30 day grace period of lawful status from the expiration of the Form DS-2019 or leaving the program... \textit{whichever comes first}
- There is no training or employment authorization during the grace period
### Considerations Specific to IMGs in General Surgery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Years</th>
<th>Research Before/During Training</th>
<th>Subspecialty Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Give IMGs competitive edge  
  • Requires advance to categorical  
  • Extends overall duration | • Prior to residency requires change of category  
  • During residency extends overall duration; visa timeframe considerations | • Requires careful planning  
  • Must change visa status or petition for an exceptional extension if not completed within allowed visa status maximum |
EVSP Resources Review

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

• 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

www.ecfmg.org
(EVSP - J-1 Visa Sponsorship)