

Bill to make Amendments to the Medical Registration Act

The Minister of Health Mr Lim Hng Kiang explained the amendments to the Medical Registration Act in Parliament. His speech covered many important areas and the following are some of the points made in the speech:

Compulsory CME

- κ Voluntary CME participation rate is unsatisfactory even after taking into consideration that some doctors who participated in CME may not have notified the SMC
- κ Many developed countries have made CME compulsory in their jurisdictions
- κ SMC will be allowed to prescribe conditions to the granting and renewal of practicing certificates, including mandatory CME.

Strengthening SMC's Disciplinary Procedures

- κ There are some limitations to SMC's current disciplinary process
- κ Inquiries into disciplinary matters may take up to 2 years to complete and there may be compelling reasons to suspend a doctor in the interests of public safety, pending the outcome of the inquiry
- κ Interim Orders Committee (IOC) will be established. IOC has the power to summarily suspend or restrict a doctor's practice before the outcome of an inquiry is known
- κ Provisions will be made to safeguard the rights of doctors who are referred to the IOC
- κ The IOC will be closely modelled after the current legislation and system in the UK
- κ Complaints Committee will be empowered to inquire into matters of professional conduct that were discovered in the course of investigations, even when they were not in the original complaint

- κ The Complaints Committee will be allowed to continue an investigation even after a complaint had been withdrawn
- κ The SMC will be authorized to refer any information regarding the criminal conviction of a doctor to the Complaints Panel even when no formal complaints are received
- κ SMC will be allowed to institute disciplinary proceedings against doctors who falsely hold themselves out to be specialists.

Registration of Medical Practitioners

- κ Foreign degree-holders seeking registration will be required to complete their housemanship locally or produce a SMC-recognized certificate of experience as evidence to the completion of overseas housemanship
- κ SMC will be allowed to impose conditions on the restoration of doctors who had been struck off the Register.

Related Matters

- κ The Schedule of the Medical Registration Act that lists the medical degrees recognized in Singapore will be expanded
- κ The one-third quota limiting female medical student intake will be lifted in 2003.

Mr Lim concluded by saying that the proposed amendments will allow the SMC to maintain the high professional standards of doctors practising in Singapore. This will ensure that Singaporeans will continue to have full confidence and trust in the doctors whom they consult.

(Source: The Health Minister's Speech, Second Reading Speech on the Medical Registration Amendment Bill. 5th December 2002)