

## MEMORANDUM

---

**To:** Provincial and Territorial Ministries of Health  
Postgraduate Deans and Deans of Faculties of Medicine  
Postgraduate Managers  
Royal College Specialty Committee Chairs  
Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS)  
Le Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ)  
The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)  
Fédération des médecins résidents du Québec (FMRQ)  
Resident Doctors of Canada (RDoC)  
The Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada (FMRAC)  
HealthCareCAN  
Medical Council of Canada (MCC)  
National Specialty Societies  
Provincial and Territorial Medical Associations  
Royal College Committees:

- Accreditation Committee
- Assessment Committee
- Committee on Specialties
- Committee on Specialty Education
- Examination Committee
- Specialty Standards Review Committee

**From:** Damon Dagnone, MD, FRCPC, Director, Standards and Accreditation, Royal College

**Subject:** Discipline Entry Route Change: Medical Biochemistry

**Date:** June 19, 2023

---

Recognizing the importance of communications with our stakeholders and transparency in committee decision-making, the Royal College is issuing this memo to notify you that Royal College Council has formally approved the following change to Medical Biochemistry's entry routes:

- The **addition of Diagnostic and Clinical Pathology (formerly General Pathology)** to the existing entry routes from Internal Medicine and Pediatrics.

### Background

#### Health of Medical Biochemistry

Since 2003, the Royal College, via the Committee on Specialties (COS), has monitored the health of Medical Biochemistry via its cyclical, six-year discipline review process. These reviews have consistently revealed fundamental issues with Medical Biochemistry's health and sustainability, including:



- The infrastructure of training programs and a maldistribution of specialists, including the reality that most trainees and practicing medical biochemists are in the province of Quebec,
- Evidence to substantiate that academic centres in other jurisdictions are operating successfully without medical biochemists, and
- The educational model for Medical Biochemistry, including poor success in either of the implemented clinical entry routes from Internal Medicine and Pediatrics to attract and recruit trainees and solve the principal and enduring problem of stimulating uptake in the discipline.

Historical interventions by the COS during preceding years have included a change in status from a primary specialty to a subspecialty, and a transition period of several years whereby the standards documents for Medical Biochemistry allowed the discipline to operate simultaneously as a primary specialty and subspecialty. These interventions were unsuccessful in resolving the sustained threats to its health.

More recently, during a 2020 In-Depth Review of Medical Biochemistry, the COS considered several recommendations produced by an Independent Panel of experts, and agreed with its assertion that Medical Biochemistry builds upon competencies in laboratory medicine, and that it bridges an important gap between clinical and laboratory medicine. In addition, it agreed that medical biochemists play a unique role in the system of specialty medicine, and that there is opportunity for the discipline to thrive in areas such as omics, precision medicine, and big data. Considering these recommendations, the COS resolved that the Specialty Committee in Medical Biochemistry should collaboratively develop a proposal for a *major* change to the discipline's entry routes, to add Diagnostic and Clinical Pathology (formerly General Pathology) as an entry route into subspecialty training programs in Medical Biochemistry.

### **Entry Route Change Application and Consultation**

As stipulated by the Royal College Policy on Applications to Modify a Discipline's Route of Entry, the COS is responsible for evaluating applications submitted by the specialty committees of existing Royal College disciplines to modify an aspect of their discipline, including entry routes.

In fall 2022, the COS reviewed the entry route change application submitted by the Specialty Committee in Medical Biochemistry and was encouraged by the prospect of a potential increase in certified specialists via a pool of eligible candidates from Diagnostic and Clinical Pathology (General Pathology) and the possibility that the Practice Eligibility Route for Subspecialists' (PER-Sub) could play a more immediate role in proliferating specialists from this entry route. In accordance with the governing policy, *major* entry route changes must undergo a national consultation, and as such, the Royal College conducted a national consultation of partner organizations and groups between January and February 2023. An overview of the results from this consultation is available upon request, by contacting [cos@royalcollege.ca](mailto:cos@royalcollege.ca).



The principal feedback from the consultation was that the creation of a laboratory medicine pathway into Medical Biochemistry could help increase a pool of certified specialists in the discipline, and that this additional entry route could generate a more diverse set of subspecialists, with complementary laboratory and clinical backgrounds. While there was remaining uncertainty surrounding whether this change will be sufficient to sustain this discipline, including acknowledgement that a proliferation of specialists from the additional entry route will likely be concentrated to certain regions in Canada, especially because Diagnostic and Clinical Pathology (General Pathology) is not a recognized discipline in Quebec where many Medical Biochemists practice. Despite this, there was remaining optimism surrounding Medical Biochemistry's impending work to design its Competence by Design (CBD) curriculum, and an inherent opportunity to develop its competencies and Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), and further align the entry disciplines that are being developed.

Since the COS' recommendation to approve the entry route change, the application has been endorsed by the Committee on Specialty Education (CSE), the Executive Committee of Council (ECC), and the entry route change was formally approved by Council at its meeting on June 8-9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Next Steps**

The Royal College will implement the modification to the discipline entry route in accordance with its internal processes, and work across operational units to implement the change will occur incrementally, beginning with editorial revisions to apply the entry route to impacted standards documents.

The COS will continue to monitor Medical Biochemistry's health and viability via its discipline review process, including evaluating the utility of the additional entry route.

If you have any questions or concerns, I invite you to contact me by email at [cos@royalcollege.ca](mailto:cos@royalcollege.ca)

Sincerely,

Damon Dagnone, MD, FRCPC  
Director, Standards and Accreditation  
Office of Standards and Assessment