



## Postgraduate Education Committee Update: Subspecialty Residency Application Process and Timelines August 5, 2016

### **Background:**

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) recently recognized Palliative Medicine as a subspecialty and is now accepting applications to have accredited programs in Palliative Medicine. This new, two-year subspecialty program will replace the previous one-year program that was conjointly accredited with the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). The one-year programs will continue to exist as certificate of added competency programs accredited by the CFPC.

### **Eligibility:** (from the RCPSC website)

Royal College Certification in Internal Medicine, Anesthesiology, or Neurology, or enrolment in a Royal College accredited residency program in these disciplines (see requirements for these qualifications).

Entry from other specialties may occur but must follow completion of the primary specialty training and must include the prerequisites of:

Twelve (12) months of clinical medicine-based rotations with a minimum of 6 months at a senior level designed to allow achievement of competencies in the consultation and care of complex medical patients, interprofessional care, and effective communication skills.

All candidates must be certified in their primary specialty in order to be eligible to write the Royal College certification examination in adult Palliative Medicine (which is still to be developed).

### **Accredited Programs:**

At the moment, no university has an officially accredited subspecialty program in Palliative Medicine, but several universities have begun the application process and the RCPSC will review these applications in the fall. Some universities have not begun this process but plan to in the near future. Note that a program does not have to be accredited in order to accept applicants, or to begin training residents, but a program does need to be accredited within 11 months of the start of training in order for that training to be recognized for subspecialty certification.

For trainees who would begin subspecialty training on July 1, 2017 (applying for programs in Fall 2016), there will be four universities accepting applications (as per the program directors).

- University of Manitoba (1 position)
  - PD: Dr. Christian LaRiviere ([clariviere@wrha.mb.ca](mailto:clariviere@wrha.mb.ca))
- University of Ottawa (1 position)
  - PD: Dr. Chris Barnes ([CBarnes@bruyere.org](mailto:CBarnes@bruyere.org))
- Queen's University (1 position)
  - PD: Dr. Ingrid Harle ([harlei@kgh.kari.net](mailto:harlei@kgh.kari.net))
- University of Toronto (2 positions)
  - PD: Dr. James Downar ([james.downar@utoronto.ca](mailto:james.downar@utoronto.ca))
- University of British Columbia (1 position)
  - PD: Dr. Charlie Chen ([charlie.chen@ubc.ca](mailto:charlie.chen@ubc.ca))

### **Application Process:**

For this year, the application process will take place outside of the CaRMS Medicine Subspecialty Match (MSM). In order to simplify the application process, and avoid any issue of CaRMS-related commitments, the four universities that are accepting applicants have chosen to harmonize their application processes and timelines, with the aim of making offers and confirming successful applicants prior to the residents' Rank Order List (ROL) submission deadline of October 27<sup>th</sup> (which is the last day that a resident can withdraw from CaRMS). This way, no applicant should have to make the difficult decision of whether to withdraw their CaRMS application without first being certain that he/she has been accepted into a Palliative Medicine residency position.

The components and timeline for the application process will be similar to that for the CaRMS MSM:

- **File Submission Deadline: submit all of the following documents no later than Friday September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**
  - Curriculum Vitae
  - Proof of residency status or certification in primary specialty
  - Personal Statement
  - 3 Reference Letters
- **Notification of Interviews: September 14-16, 2016**
- **Interviews: October 5-11, 2016**
- **Initial Offers: Wednesday, October 12, 2016**
  - Applicants will be asked to accept or reject their offer within 48h
- **Finalizing Successful Applicants: Friday, October 21, 2016**

Note that each postgraduate education office may have additional requirements for applicants, including proof of citizenship, TOEFL scores (for non-English speakers), etc.

Invitation/Notification Information: The Program Director will contact applicants who are selected for an interview via email. Interview times and location details will be provided at that time.

Notification/Invitation: The program will only notify all applicants of whether they are selected for an interview.

Details regarding interview:

Application files will be reviewed and scored by members of a file review committee on the basis of the personal statement, reference letters, interest in palliative medicine, interest in academic work, and the strength of the curriculum vitae/transcript. Applicants will be contacted for interviews once the files have been reviewed.

Each candidate will undergo an interview with a panel of 3 or more interviewers. The interview panel will include the Program Director and a current or recent graduate from the conjointly accredited residency training program. Candidates will have an opportunity to ask questions about the program at the end of the interview.

Candidates who do not have an interview will not be considered for ranking.

Selection Criteria:

Each school will rank its candidates using its own selection process.

Candidates will be selected based on:

1. A strong file, including:
  - a. A well-written personal statement, outlining your reasons for applying to the subspecialty residency program.
  - b. Evidence of clinical skill in palliative care from referees.
  - c. Evidence of interest in palliative medicine, including at least one elective in palliative care.
  - d. Evidence of interest in scholarly or academic activity in the form of current or previous projects. Note that these projects do not have to be directly relevant to palliative care; we understand that applicants may have only recently discovered a passion for Palliative Care. We are looking for interest and ability in scholarly or academic work in general.
2. Performance during the interview, including:
  - a. Interpersonal and communication skill.
  - b. Commitment to Palliative Medicine

The ideal candidate is a compassionate physician who has demonstrated strong clinical skills and commitment to palliative medicine, and who has shown an interest in pursuing scholarly or academic activity. If you have any questions about the application process or the residency training programs, please do not hesitate to contact one of the program directors listed above.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

*Q: What is the difference between this program and the 12-month training program that previous trainees have completed?*

A: The previous 12-month program (the “conjoint” program) was a training program that all final-year trainees or practicing physicians could apply to, which was conjointly accredited by the RCPSC and the CFPC. This program will no longer exist as of July 2017. This program was replaced by 2 separate programs- a 12-month certificate of added competency program accredited by the CCFP (which is intended for family medicine trainees and graduates only) and a 24-month subspecialty program accredited by the RCPSC (the program described on this web page) that allows multiple entry routes.

*Q: How do I know if I am eligible to apply for the subspecialty program?*

A: According to the RCPSC, trainees are eligible to apply if they have Royal College Certification in Internal Medicine, Anesthesiology, or Neurology, or enrolment in a Royal College accredited residency program in these disciplines (see requirements for these qualifications).

Entrance from other specialties may occur but must follow completion of the primary specialty training and must include twelve (12) months of clinical medicine-based rotations with a minimum of 6 months at a senior level (e.g. PGY-2 or if resident is regularly entrusted with responsibility for direct independent patient care under the supervision of and direct responsibility to a senior subspecialty resident or faculty member), designed to allow achievement of competencies in the consultation and care of complex medical patients, interprofessional care, and effective communication skills.

All candidates must be certified in their primary specialty in order to be eligible to write the Royal College certification examination in Adult Palliative Medicine.

If you are unsure whether or not your training would make you eligible to apply, do not hesitate to contact the program director.

*Q: This program has not yet been approved by the RCPSC. If there is any delay in the process and the program is not approved this fall, will I still be able to start my training in July 2017?*

A: A trainee can begin a training program even before the training program itself has been officially approved by the RCPSC. The program must receive approval within the first 11 months of the start of training (in this case, June 2018).

*Q: Do I need to do an elective at the host University in order to be accepted?*

A: We are looking for trainees who are skilled, dedicated and interested in a career in Palliative Care. This skill, dedication and interest can be demonstrated at any University. It is helpful to have completed an elective at any university where you are applying (for you as much as for the program), but this is not a requirement to be accepted into a program.