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Domaine de compétence ciblée en cytopathologie : une version améliorée de la formation de surspécialisation en cytopathologie au Canada

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RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article résume la situation actuelle pour ce qui est du domaine de compétence ciblée en cytopathologie du Collège royal des médecins et chirurgiens du Canada, notamment la possibilité d'accéder au titre par la route d'évaluation par la pratique, les nouveautés en matière d'accès au titre et de portfolio sommatif fondé sur des données probantes ainsi que l'admissibilité des candidats.

Area of focused competence in cytopathology: An empowered version of fellowship training in cytopathology in Canada

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ABSTRACT

This is a brief update on the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Area of Focused Competence in Cytopathology, including practice eligibility route opportunity, accreditation updates, change in portfolio evidence approval and applicant eligibility.

Area of Focused Competence in Cytopathology (cont.)

UPDATE

Although the Area of Focused Competence in Cytopathology (AFC-Cytopathology) discipline has been officially recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPC) since 2012, there is still a surprisingly (and somewhat shockingly) low awareness of this new entity within the Canadian pathology community, including among pathologists and pathology residents. What follows is a brief update on the AFC-Cytopathology discipline, with emphasis on changes that have been recently, or are soon to be, implemented. The readers are also referred to previous publications which outline in more detail the rationale for the development of the AFC-Cytopathology discipline by the RCPC and events of the initial years of deployment of AFC-Cytopathology programs in Canada.¹⁻³

The AFC-Cytopathology programs are available at four accredited sites throughout Canada and, in essence, correspond to what used to be referred to as “cytopathology fellowship training programs,” a term still commonly applied in the United States and internationally. The AFC-Cytopathology programs have the additional benefit of an official governance structure and recognition by the RCPC. AFC-Cytopathology trainees complete their training program, typically of one year duration, with a Diploma awarded by the RCPC for a portfolio demonstrating they have achieved each of the 15 required milestones designed around specific competencies stipulated by the AFC-Cytopathology Competency Training Requirements. This official recognition granted by the RCPC to the successful AFC-Cytopathology trainee is a valuable asset when applying for a job, as it certifies the candidate as a recognized consultant in the discipline and in particular speaks to the candidate’s suitability for a leadership role in cytopathology (i.e. clinical leader of a cytopathology laboratory) and/or as

an academic cytopathologist. As of December 2020 there were eight Diplomates of the RCPC for the AFC-Cytopathology discipline.

In contrast to previous cytopathology fellowship training programs that were administered and overseen only by the local university where they were offered, the AFC-Cytopathology training programs are subject to official accreditation by the RCPC, a robust process of continuous quality improvement analogous to what is used for pathology residency training programs in Canada. Like residency training programs, the AFC programs operate on a competency-based model. However, there are no certifying exams from the RCPC at the end of the AFC-Cytopathology training; instead, the AFC-Cytopathology Diplomate designation can be obtained by completion of a comprehensive portfolio deemed to be adequate by the program and ratified by the Postgraduate Vice Dean of the affiliated university for Diploma designation by the RCPC. It is beyond the scope of this brief article to go into the details of the elements of the training portfolio, but in short, the portfolio exhibits evidence of achievement of competence in the scope of practice of Cytopathology. This includes responsibility for the:

- a) interpretation of gynecological and non-gynecological cytological specimens;
- b) management of the cytopathology laboratory;
- c) performance of fine needle aspirates of superficial body sites;
- d) selection and interpretation of ancillary cytological studies for diagnosis and prognosis;
- e) advancement of the discipline of cytopathology through scholarship; and
- f) engagement of governments, other physicians, and other health

professions in the promotion of the role of cytopathology in patient wellness and care.

The RCPC conducted a recent re-evaluation of AFC programs across all Royal College specialties by gathering feedback from the AFC program directors and AFC trainees. This has led to a streamlining and simplification of administrative processes that were reported as too cumbersome and onerous. One important change concerns the evaluation of the trainee’s portfolio, which will now occur at the level of the Competence Committee (or equivalent) of the local AFC program instead of the previously required time-consuming electronic submission to the RCPC for review by external assessors. Candidate portfolios, however, will be assessed externally at the time of accreditation of each individual AFC program and at two-year touchpoints with the aim to verify the adequacy of the local assessment process.

An important and welcome change has been made in recent months for the eligibility of candidates to enter AFC-Cytopathology programs. Previously, eligibility was limited to candidates who had completed Anatomical or General Pathology residency in Canada. Now candidates who have done equivalent training outside Canada (in the United States or elsewhere), depending on program-specific admission requirements, are eligible as well. This widens the pool of candidates for AFC-Cytopathology training positions, potentially helping the four currently existing accredited AFC-Cytopathology programs (Western University, McGill University, University of Toronto, and University of Calgary) to fill their AFC-Cytopathology trainee positions on a more consistent basis. This initiative also opens opportunities for international recognition of AFC-Cytopathology training programs in Canada.

An evolving change for the AFC-

Area of Focused Competence in Cytopathology (cont.)

Cytopathology discipline is the new Practice Eligibility Route (PER) which has recently become available. This refers to the possibility for a pathologist who is already practising within the scope of the AFC-Cytopathology discipline to apply for Diploma status without completion of an AFC-Cytopathology training program. The new process route has moved from a portfolio, with review of individual submitted documents of activities, to an application process that reviews credentials and achievements of the applicant more holistically and which aligns with PER process across RCPSC specialties. The application process consists of a detailed questionnaire inquiring about the scope of practice of the applicant, as well as multisource feedback forms to be filled by referees familiar with the applicant's practice.

As the AFC-Cytopathology discipline

continues to evolve in the future, potential avenues to explore include the possibility of eventual recognition by the American Board of Pathology and the feasibility of giving partial credits to the AFC trainees who have had substantial diagnostic, academic and/or administrative involvement with cytopathology prior to their formal AFC training to allow achievement of all required AFC-cytopathology competencies and Diploma status in a shorter period of time.

In summary, the AFC-Cytopathology programs are a much-needed type of accredited cytopathology fellowship training programs in Canada which provide structured and advanced cytopathology specialty training for the next generation of cytopathology leaders. The AFC-Cytopathology programs have undergone some positive changes since our last publication including the PER opportunity, accreditation updates,

change in portfolio evidence approval, and applicant eligibility.

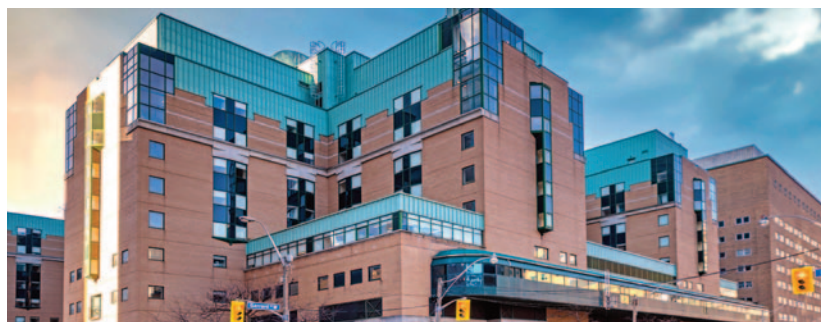
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Duties will include the delivery of a broad range of paediatric pathology services in association with other paediatric pathologists, participating in common divisional functions. A fully accredited residency program is in place and teaching of residents, fellows and medical students is expected.

Subspecialty interests or expertise in one or more of paediatric and perinatal autopsy, renal, GI/liver and molecular pathology is desirable.

Dr. George Yousef | Chief, Department of Paediatric Laboratory Medicine

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