

Postgraduate training in Kuwait: review of accomplishments

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The Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) came into being in 1984 under an Amiri Decree. Among the important goals of establishing the institute were the enhancement of the level of competence of health professionals, enabling them to keep abreast of the developments in the medical specialties and patient management, and the preparation of graduates in the health professions for specialization in the different branches of medicine.

A review of the accomplishments of KIMS during the past 20 years would allow the administrators and policy makers to record the contributions that the institute has made in the field of postgraduate education. It would also help to identify areas that demand additional inputs and those into which resources need to be mobilized so that the overall goals may be achieved, where possible, more efficiently.

Postgraduate Training in Medical and Dental Specialties

A number of steps have been taken aimed at improving the quality of medical education at the postgraduate level. At present, KIMS administers postgraduate training in many specialties and subspecialties. These are Internal Medicine, Dermatology, Surgery and specialty disciplines in Surgery, Pediatrics, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Family Medicine, Laboratory Medicine, Radiology, Nuclear Medicine, Dentistry, and Public Health.

Many training programs are conducted in collaboration with international training bodies. Many parts of the Membership Examinations of the Royal Colleges of the UK are also conducted for the benefit of interested clinicians in a range of medical specialties. A recent step that has been taken with the aim of expanding the scope of postgraduate education

in health professions is the collaborative link between KIMS and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland for postgraduate training in dentistry.

The Global Standards for Postgraduate Education that have been recommended by the World Federation of Medical Education¹ in 2003 have received due consideration by KIMS. Training the trainers workshops have been conducted by locally-based specialists in medical education as well as by consultants invited from abroad. Assessment of the trainees has been a topic area that received specific attention within these training programs.

Internship Training

KIMS administers internship training in Kuwait, with trainees following rotations in Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynecology, and Pediatrics at five major General Teaching Hospitals.

A structured program for internship training was established and the system of documentation improved. The trainees as well as the trainers now receive learner-centered goals and objectives for each rotation. These moves are supplemented with an in-training evaluation format that assesses the trainee in six clinical skill domains and in relation to specific procedures that have been listed under each specialty.² Workshops for training the trainers have been conducted so that the overall goals of training could be achieved as desired.

Documentation and Information

The system of documentation used within the postgraduate training programs has been improved. Trainers are now required to submit structured in-training evaluation reports on trainee performances in place of the global rating-based assessments done in the past.

A series of information booklets has been published regarding the different postgraduate

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training programs, outlining the selection procedure, content, duration and sequencing of training modules, and the examination format. An *Educational Guide* that highlights all the training and educational activities of KIMS, too, has been made available.³

Journal in Postgraduate Education

In 2002 KIMS launched its own peer-reviewed journal, the *Bulletin of the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization*. The publication, which appears bi-annually, has the promotion of postgraduate education and clinical practice, and continuing professional development and life-long learning as its main themes. The publication is distributed among academic and health care service institutions in the Arabian Gulf region and selected academic institutions worldwide. In addition to the hard copy version, the *Bulletin* appears on-line at <www.kims.org.kw/bulletin>.

KIMS Website in Internet

In its efforts to expand the accessibility to information on postgraduate education in Kuwait and also as a means of assisting health care practitioners who wish to venture into the ever-widening field of information and communication technology media, KIMS designed its own Internet website in 2000.⁴ The site, accessible at <www.kims.org.kw>, provides basic information on the training programs, the administration of the institute and its different Faculties. A number of links enable the visitor to access useful sites dealing with continuing professional development (CPD) and reference literature.

Regional Collaboration in Postgraduate Education

Aimed at promoting regional collaboration in postgraduate education within the member countries that constitute the Gulf Cooperation Council, KIMS was instrumental in initiating moves towards the establishment of an advisory and coordinating body. These steps led to the formation of the Committee for Training and CME/CPD in GCC Countries in 2001. This committee is responsible for the sharing of relevant information among the policy makers and trainers and for coordinating postgraduate training activities.

Research in Medical Education

KIMS has conducted research in the subject areas of the choice of specialties for postgraduate training, effectiveness of CME Program implementation, and the assessment of clinical experiences during internship training. The results have been published both in international refereed journals and presented at conferences held locally and abroad.

Continuing Professional Development and Life-long Learning Scheme

As it is imperative that health professionals who provide health care services to the community engage in continuing professional development and life-long education activities, planning for a formal CME scheme commenced in 1999. KIMS implemented its CME Program in 2000, with physicians and dentists as its first-phase target groups. In 2003, the scheme was expanded to include pharmacists, and was also renamed the MPC Program (Maintenance of Professional Competence Program), to reflect the overall goal of CME/CPD.

Conclusion

During the past twenty years KIMS has taken the required steps to meet the goals that warranted its establishment. Many physicians have completed their postgraduate training in local settings or at institutions abroad, and now serve as members of the academic staff of Kuwait University or as consultants in the Ministry of Health.^{5,6} These measures have been facilitated by the Faculties and Committees of KIMS instituting a range of postgraduate training programs to meet the specialist needs of Kuwait. The disruption caused to the existing training programs on account of the geo-political events in the 1990 to 1991 period have been rectified and a number of new programs have been implemented since.

MEDICAL EDUCATION CONSULTATION OFFICE

The maintenance of the quality of medical education is of prime concern to KIMS, and the institute would continue to invest its resources towards achieving this goal. The establishment of a Medical Education Consultation Office would facilitate the steps that would be taken and would benefit all parties that have a stake in postgraduate medical education.

References

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