

Mountain medicine – the regulator’s view

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Background

The GMC – what we do

- Our statutory purpose is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine.
- The GMC has standards which underpin the education, revalidation, fitness to practice and registration of doctors

Duties of a doctor - from the GMC web site

Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and health. To justify that trust you must show respect for human life and make sure your practice meets the standards expected of you in each of four domains:

1. Knowledge skills and performance
2. Safety and quality
3. Communication, partnership and teamwork
4. Maintaining trust

Knowledge skills and performance

- Make the care of your patient your first concern.
- Provide a good standard of practice and care.
- Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
- Recognise and work within the limits of your competence.

Safety and quality

- Take prompt action if you think that patient safety, dignity or comfort is being compromised.
- Protect and promote the health of patients and the public.

Communication, partnership and teamwork

- Treat patients as individuals and respect their dignity.
- Treat patients politely and considerately.
- Respect patients’ right to confidentiality.
- Work in partnership with patients.
- Listen to, and respond to, their concerns and preferences.
- Give patients the information they want or need in a way they can understand.

- Respect patients' right to reach decisions with you about their treatment and care.
- Support patients in caring for themselves to improve and maintain their health.
- Work with colleagues in the ways that best serve patients' interests.

Maintaining trust

- Be honest and open and act with integrity.
- Never discriminate unfairly against patients or colleagues.
- Never abuse your patients' trust in you or the public's trust in the profession.

You are personally accountable for your professional practice and must always be prepared to justify your decisions and actions.

Basic requirements for registration

All applicants except for those Europeans applying to provide temporary and occasional services are required to provide certain basic evidence and do certain things as part of their application. Namely:

- Provide evidence of qualification
- Proof of identity and nationality
- Provide their most recent five years' employment history
- Provide an employer's reference from their most recent employer
- Provide evidence of good standing from any jurisdiction where they currently hold registration or have done so within the most recent five years.
- Complete a 13-question fitness to practise declaration and sign a declaration giving the GMC wide ranging powers to conduct further investigations and enquiries as we deem appropriate during the application.

The regulatory view of practising medicine on mountain and expeditions

You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence

For doctors:

Will I be working within the limits of my competence (Good Medical Practice GMP p14)?

Am I physically fit enough (GMP p28-29)?

Have I considered the impact of this break in my practice – revalidation requirements and restoring my licence to practice and registration?

What do I need to do to register with the in-country regulator?

Considerations for the GMC:

Can the GMC verify your registration with the in-country regulator?

If not, is there any other acceptable evidence?

Is this break in practice relevant to your application to restore your registration/licence?

Will there be any impact on your revalidation?

Revalidation

- If you have a responsible officer or suitable person, speak to them about your plans as early as possible. They may be able to help identify any action to take before your break, as well as any support you'll need to help you return to medical work in the future.
- During your break, it will be important to keep up to date with changes and new developments. Think about how you can do this.
- If you plan to take a longer break from UK practice, consider whether you can give up your licence to practise but maintain your registration. If you do this, you'll pay a reduced fee and you won't need to revalidate.
- If you need your licence back at a later date, it's a straightforward process that takes around three weeks. We have guidance on giving up and restoring your licence.
- If you need to keep your licence, you must continue to participate in revalidation. Your connection details may change and you may no longer have access to the appraisal systems you have been using. Check your contract or employment details and explore your options. In some circumstances, you may need to find your own appraiser. In others, it may be acceptable to miss an appraisal.
- We don't need you to catch up on appraisals you miss because of a break in practice. But you should agree this and the best way to fulfil any local requirements with your responsible officer or suitable person before the break begins. If you don't have a connection, you should speak to us.

Maintaining Registration

The GMC recognises that doctors may wish to temporarily relinquish their UK licence to practise while abroad. They have produced guidance for overseas regulators and overseas organisations about revalidation and the licence to practice for doctors working wholly outside the UK.

However, many international medical organisations such as Medicines Sans Frontiers continue to require that their medical volunteers maintain a licence in their home country.

If doctors return to the UK within five-years of being registered overseas and can produce a 'certificate of good standing' from the appropriate overseas regulator, it can be relatively straightforward to regain a licence to practice upon return. If the volunteer was not locally registered the doctor would need to supply a form (UD8) from the organisation they volunteered for, instead of a certificate of good standing.

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