

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES OF THE COLLEGE OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS, SINGAPORE

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COLLEGE ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

The College has 3 Academic programmes. The Academic year starts every July. The three programmes are:

- The GDFM Programme
- MMed(Family Medicine) Programme
- Fellowship Programme

The GDFM and MMed(FM) programmes are partly Internet based. Reading materials are periodically uploaded to the College Website for retrieval by participants. The self-directed learning sessions are complemented by workshops where case studies are discussed.

THE OBJECTIVES IN THE COLLEGE'S EDUCATIONAL THRUST

The primary objective of the programmes is structured learning to develop the general practitioner or aspiring family physician with relevant lessons in as complete a manner as possible with the time given.

A further objective is accessibility. The purpose of the basic programme – the GDFM is not to filter out but to include every general practitioner into the learning community so that he or she will be better equipped for family practice. The premise is that the MBBS is not specific enough for general practice.

THE ACADEMIC CORE

The academic core of the Diploma and Masters programme is the Family Medicine Training Programme or FMTP. This is essentially a two-

year, 8-module course that encompasses the breadth of Family Medicine and General practice. Each module lasts for 3 months.

Summary of the FMTP

- The eight modules cover all major topics in general practice from birth to death, practice skills and standards of care
- In each module there are 3 broad categories of topics which make each module heterogeneous and broad based.

Submodules (categories) in each module

The 3 broad categories in each module are:

- Whole person Medicine (4 sessions)
- Disease Management by Body systems (3 sessions)
- Practice Management (1 session).

How each module is conducted

- The modules are patterned to enable adult self learning by having the eight weekly lessons in each module primed by 4 face-to-face workshops and 1 tutorial.

Attendance credits for exams

- The programme also motivates participants by only allowing 75% attendance of the workshops and tutorials as qualifying for credits for the GDFM or MMed Examinations.

GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN FAMILY MEDICINE (GDFM OR MMed EXAMINATIONS)

The Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine:

- Was introduced in July 2000
- Is a two year programme, and
- Aims to provide vocational training for the majority of doctors practising as family physicians in Singapore.

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Stretching the time to do the GDFM programme

Some practitioners may want to do the GDFM more leisurely. They can stretch the GDFM programme to be done in five years since each module of the FMTP is valid for up to five years before sitting for the exam. However they will have to take the FMTP again if they intend to continue to do the Masters since the FMTP is valid for only 5 years.

Self service – use the web!

The GDFM is in part an online programme using the College website to disseminate on-line materials through the web. GDFM tutorial notes are made available for document downloads.

FMTP core

By having a common FMTP core programme it is possible for the GDFM candidate to progress stepwise to the Masters after attaining the Diploma since the credits in FMTP is valid for five years.

Four skills course

- There are three compulsory skills courses to emphasize basic clinical and diagnostic skills essential to general practice
- Candidates are also expected to attend one elective short clinical course of his or her choice eg. BCLS, surgical skills update, etc.

Compulsory skills course

The three compulsory courses are:

- The Principles and Practice (P&P) course
- The Communication and Counselling (C&C) course
- The Basic Clinical Skills course.

Tutorials

- There is also one tutorial per quarter or 4 tutorials in the year. Each diploma trainee will be

attached to a tutorial group of up to six trainees under an appointed tutor.

The Examination

The GDFM culminates in an examination consisting of:

- an MCQ paper
- a short answer/modified essay question paper
- an Objectively Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

THE MMED (FM) PROGRAMME

The MMed(FM) programme had its roots in 1988 as the Family Medicine Vocational Traineeship programme. The Examination evolved from the College Diplomate Examination (MCGP) which was established in 1972. The first MMed(FM) Examination was held in 1993.

Two streams

There are two streams in the MMed(FM) Programme. The public sector traineeship stream was started in 1988. Trainees were selected through an interview with the FM committee. In 1995 the PPS or Private practitioners stream was initiated to cater for private practitioners

MOH Programme

This programme is the training programme for doctors working in restructured hospitals. It consists of:

- a three-years' training made up of two years of hospital rotating postings and one year of outpatient postings
- an academic core programme which is the FMTP described above
- working experience of at least one year as a medical officer.

PPS Programme

- working experience of at least 4 years in primary care OR
- fulfilled requirements in institutional practice equivalent to the FM trainees and/or approved by the FM Committee.

THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

The apex of the College's academic training is the fellowship programme. This is an advanced programme which at this point of time is a two-year programme.

There are presently two tracks in the Fellowship programme

- FMFP (general practice)
- FMFP (Aged Care).

Separate tracks to address the medical needs of the community will be implemented where relevant and necessary. The two tracks are summarised and compared in Table 1.

LINKING THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES TOGETHER

Progression through the PPS route

Participants in the GDFM programme can, during the 5 years of starting the programme, progress to the MMed(FM) by taking the PPS route.

To begin, they will apply to the College for the PPS programme before the deadline for applications of the academic year. Once accepted into the PPS programme, they will follow the tutorials in the PPS programme and join short courses. They should also organise their own clinical tutorials with their colleagues and buddies in the PPS stream (group directed, group motivated learning). The end-point of this phase of training is the Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM).

As a progression, the GDFM graduands can take the MMed(FM) exams once they have the postings or general practice experience. In this way the road to the Masters is more gradual in contrast to the more intensive FM traineeship track. The end-point of this phase of training is the Master of Medicine in Family Medicine (MMed(FM))

As a progression, the MMed(FM) graduands can apply to be in the fellowship programme either in the Ambulatory Care Fellowship programme or the Aged Care Fellowship programme.

The requirement for the Aged Care Fellowship programme is that he must work in Aged care institutions or organisations and fulfill the requirements of a 6-month posting in a geriatric medicine department and complete the Graduate Diploma in Geriatric Medicine (GDGM) conducted by the Graduate School of Medical Studies or an equivalent Diploma from another training institution.

THE COLLEGE'S VISION

The College's vision is that through its programmes there will be opportunities for every general practitioner and non-specialist doctor to go through a formal structured training programmes. The College is confident that the programmes will add to the knowledge and skills of the general practitioner and family physician to enable them to be professionally competent if mastery of his discipline. The College also believes that the structured training of the Family physician will result in better health status of the Singaporeans. By increasing the skills of general practitioners to be better generalists and yet be able to focus on particular areas of specialty to augment their practice, they will be able to provide higher value care.

Table 1. Comparison between regular FMFP programme and Aged Care FMFP programme

COMPONENT	FMFP (AMBULATORY FAMILY MEDICINE)	FMFP (AGED CARE)
Clinical Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 Case Studies every 6 months - 5 Topic Reviews every 6 months - Presentation of 1 Case Study every 6 months - Presentation of 1 Topic Review every 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Case Studies every 6 months & 2 Topic Reviews every 6 months during DGM year (the DGM course already has a total of 31 topic reviews within its 5 modules and at least 11 case studies) - Presentation of 1 Case Study every 6 months - Presentation of 1 Topic Review every 6 months <p>Non-DGM year to revert to the same requirements as the Ambulatory Family Medicine candidates</p> <p>For candidates who already have the DGM, to do 7 case studies and 7 topic reviews per year to be on par with those without the DGM</p>
Short Skills Courses	<p>One short course every 6 months comprising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Methodology - Clinical Audit - Methods of Instruction - Elective clinical course 	<p>One year-long Diploma in Geriatric Medicine Course</p> <p>2 compulsory short courses – Research Methodology and Clinical Audit</p>
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 MMed/GDFM Supervisor/Asst Supervisor sessions every 6 months - 1 Chairman/Seminar/Conference/Organiser/Undergraduate Teaching every 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching sessions (eg. Presentations, talks) to nurses/junior doctors - MMed (FM)/GDFM Supervisor/Asst Supervisor sessions/Undergraduate Teaching <p>Total of 10 teaching sessions in two years</p>
Other Activities	<p>Participate in 1 research project and/or acquire added clinical competence in a specific area of FM</p>	<p>Participate in 1 research/management/audit project related to parent organization involved in community geriatrics</p> <p>A 6-month supervised posting in an accredited approved acute geriatrics unit</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Formative Interview with mentor every 6 mths - 1 Exit Interview with Censor Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Formative Interview with mentor every 6 months - 1 Exit Interview with Censors Board
Meetings	<p>Monthly (23 meetings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 meetings – 10 per year - 11 weekend workshops during DGM year
Attendance record, reports, postings, Log Book & Exit Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio recording of 5 Case Studies and 2 Topic Review every 6 months & attendance record of monthly meetings - Detailed write-up of the 4 Clinical Cases and the 4 Topic Reviews which were presented. - Attendance record for 4 skills courses - Attendance record of teaching responsibilities - Report of research/acquired clinical competence in a specific area of FM - Report of the three 6-monthly formative assessment interview by mentor and summative exit interview with Censors Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio recording of Studies and Topic Reviews every 6 months & attendance record of monthly meetings according to the numbers stipulated for the clinical medicine categories above - Detailed write-up of the 4 Clinical Cases and the 4 Topic Reviews which were presented. - Attendance record of 2 compulsory skills courses - A pass in the DGM Course - Attendance record of teaching responsibilities - Report of research/management/audit project - 6 months posting record in acute geriatrics unit & 18 mths in aged care setting - Report of the three 6-monthly formative assessment interview by mentor and summative exit interview with Censor Board