

## **GCC ousts Arab board with independent medical council**

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**EXCLUSIVE: Doctors undergoing specialist training in GCC countries will answer to a new medical board, following news of a radical overhaul of medical training.**

The GCC Council for Health Specialisations will replace the Arab Medical Board, based in Syria, as the body for accrediting training programmes and granting postgraduate board certificates in the GCC.

Under a three-year plan endorsed by the GCC Council of Ministers for Health, the board will work to streamline postgraduate training across its member countries and ultimately lift the standard of education to international levels.

The Council will also be responsible for accrediting teaching hospitals in the region.

"The aim is to raise the quality of specialisation schemes for junior doctors to match that seen in the West," said Dr Abdulatif Al Khal, president elect of the Council, and the director of medical education in Qatar's Hamad Medical Corporation.

"Our boards should be recognised internationally so doctors will be able to work and be recognised anywhere in the world."

He hopes to award the first boards within two years.

The Council was established in June of this year, after a vote by the region's health ministers.

The team will be headquartered in Qatar and will report directly to the GCC ministers for health, Dr Al Khal said.

"We will be the regional equivalent to the American Board of Medical Specialties," he told *Medical Times*.

The initiative will occur in a series of stages, and will spread to include specialist education for nurses, pharmacists, dentists and allied health professionals.

The existing GCC Council for Nurse Specialisation, which was established a year ago, will shift under the umbrella of the board within the next twelve months, Dr Al Khal said.

"When fully established, we'll have several branches and these will work with colleges across the GCC to accredit health workers. It's an ambitious project."

Deals are likely to be struck with a number of existing medical bodies to fasttrack the establishment of top-level educational guidelines.

Fledgling talks have begun with medical boards in Australia, Canada, America and the UK to outline the path to upgrading local postgraduate schemes.

"We will be taking inspiration from leading education systems and incorporating it into our system, said Dr Al Khal. "We're realistic -it will take a lot of work to persuade international bodiest we're on a par. We're likely to need collaboration with a number of agencies."

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