

U.S. Department of Education

Staff Analysis
of the Report Submitted by

Taiwan

Prepared July 2003

Background

At its September 1996 meeting, the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA) made a determination that Taiwan's standards for the evaluation of its medical schools were not comparable to those used in the United States. This determination was based solely on the fact that Taiwan had not submitted sufficient information about its standards.

Taiwan subsequently submitted additional materials regarding its medical schools, and appeared before the NCFMEA again at its October 1998 meeting. Although Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) did provide some information and documentation regarding the medical programs provided by the country's medical schools, it did not provide any information on the standards or processes it used to evaluate the medical schools.

There was evidence to suggest that students were receiving a quality education in medical colleges, and there was documentation to show that the Ministry had conducted at least one review of the medical schools and had made recommendations for improvement. However, the information was insufficient for the Committee to determine that Taiwan had an accreditation/approval process that was comparable to that used to accredit medical schools located in the United States.

According to documentation submitted by Taiwan in December 2001, NCFMEA's October 1998 decision marked "a very important turning point for medical education in Taiwan." As a result of the Committee's findings, in November 1998, a member of the delegation that had attended the NCFMEA meeting submitted a report on the Committee's decision and a proposal to completely overhaul the process of accrediting Taiwan's medical schools to the MOE. In December 1998, MOE called a meeting of the Deans of all ten of the then-existing medical schools to consider the proposal, which was accepted. (Note: There are now eleven medical schools in Taiwan.)

The proposal called for the establishment of a new accrediting body, the Taiwan Medical Accreditation Council (TMAC), to function independently of MOE. TMAC's initial five-year budget was to be provided by MOE in the form of a

contribution. The approval of this contribution took several months, so the establishment of TMAC was delayed until July 2000.

TMAC was developed under the authority of the Ministry of Education, through the non-profit commission, National Health Research Institutes. TMAC in essence operates as the accrediting body for MOE, although the council is an independent agency and MOE does not interfere in its operation. MOE was already conducting accreditation visits to schools prior to the formation of TMAC, but was not conducting these visits on a regular basis. One of the primary benefits of TMAC's establishment has been that medical school evaluation is now being conducted on a regularly scheduled rotation.

TMAC has developed a set of criteria for the evaluation of medical schools in Taiwan. However, many of the areas that would normally be addressed in an agency's standards are subject to governmental regulation in Taiwan. The government has very specific requirements in many of these areas, and they are not subject to TMAC control.

TMAC's review process is based on a typical American model. Schools prepare a self-study. A review team, chosen from a site visitor pool, reviews the self study, then conducts a typical on-site visit using a specified format and the agency's criteria. The team submits a report to TMAC for review and an accrediting decision.

Information about the newly established TMAC and its progress in evaluating medical schools in Taiwan was reviewed at the March 2002 meeting of the NCFMEA. At that time the Committee determined that the standards used by TMAC were comparable to those used to accredit medical education programs in the United States. The Committee also requested that TMAC submit annual reports describing Taiwan's continuing accreditation activities.

Summary of Findings

Based on its review of the annual report submitted by TMAC, regarding its accreditation activities, Department staff concludes that Taiwan has provided all of the information requested by the NCFMEA. Based upon the information obtained from the Council, Department staff also concludes that the country's accreditation activities during the past year appear to be consistent with the NCFMEA guidelines.

Staff Analysis

Overview of accreditation activities:

During the year, TMAC conducted several accrediting activities:

- Held regular meeting to discuss matters related to the upcoming Spring 2002 site visits. The plan developed by the TMAC staff was approved.
- Held a one-day training session on how to conduct an on-site visit. All eleven TMAC members, plus fourteen local on-site visitors were selected from the visitors' pool. The two overseas site visitors were not able to attend the training session; however, they were given orientation upon arriving for the visits.
- Conducted Spring 2002 site visits at four medical schools. All site visits went according to schedule and were felt to be more effective and professional than previous visits, due to increased experience on the part of the site visitors and the evaluation training that had been conducted.

The four medical schools that were visited were:

National Cheng Kung University
Kaohsiung Medical University
Taipei Medical University
Fu Jen Catholic University College of Medicine (new)

- Reached consensus to place all three of the established schools (one school was newly established, already requiring yearly visits) on "conditions attached" status, which required follow-up visits for the reevaluation of specific issues at the regular TMAC meeting held in August 2002. The reports were sent to the MOE, in order for the MOE to instruct each school to take corrective actions

At the same meeting, one TMAC member resigned and was replaced. A decision was reached to visit the four remaining medical schools in 2003.

- Conducted three follow-up visits. Chang Gung University College of Medicine received a follow-up visit on the quality of its teaching and faculty retraining program. National Yang-Ming University School of Medicine received a follow-up visit on the restructuring of its medical school. Fu Jen Catholic University College of Medicine received a follow-up visit to determine how students were performing in basic science classes. National Yang-Ming University School of Medicine was asked to submit a self-evaluation report in lieu of a site visit.

- Establish the Spring 2003 site visit schedule following the August 2002 TMAC meeting. Schools to be visited were requested to conduct a self-study. Site visit teams were selected, and the teams were organized. However, as a result of the SARS outbreak on the island, it was necessary to postpone the Spring 2003 site visits until Fall 2003. The observation visit scheduled for the NCFMEA's Dr. William Deal was also rescheduled for Fall 2003 as a result.

Summary of any changes or developments in the following areas:

Laws and Regulations:

TMAC notes that there have been no changes to the laws or regulations that would affect its accrediting activities, since this accreditation cycle has not yet been completed. Changes will be made, if necessary, once the current cycle is complete.

Standards, Processes and Procedures:

TMAC likewise notes that there have been no changes to its standards. The current standards will undergo reevaluation in 2005, at which time they will have been in use for five years.

New on-site visitors are added to TMAC's slate each year; however, some who have participated in prior visits are included to ensure continuity. Both new and returning site visitors must participate in an annual training session. Follow-up visits are conducted by three members of the school's original on-site review team in order to ensure familiarity with the ongoing issues.

TMAC's bylaws establish the TMAC members' terms of office at three years, with one-third of the members replaced at the end of each year. In accordance with the bylaws, this scheduled reorganization has been completed, and a new TMAC chairperson is scheduled to be selected by the members at the August 2003 meeting.

Periodic reviews of schools that have been fully accredited will take place every six years. At this time, no school has received full accreditation, and all require follow-up visits, which have been scheduled accordingly.

One of the TMAC members has written a white paper putting all of the information and conclusions on what reforms are required of medical education in Taiwan into one paper. This paper has been submitted to the MOE for study, and it is hoped that these changes will be required by the MOE beginning in the Fall 2003. Among other items, the paper emphasizes the need for TMAC to become more involved in the evaluation of medical graduates in the clinical (residency) setting.

Residents are currently evaluated by a separate body that conducts hospital accreditation. Collaboration between TMAC and the hospital accreditation body is currently being planned.

A move has also been initiated to transform the current Dean's Conference into an association similar to the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC). The primary goal of creating such an organization will be for it to assume a greater role of self-regulatory and self-disciplinary actions independent of the MOE.

A paper on TMAC's initial successes was presented to the World Federation for Medical Education in Copenhagen, Denmark in March 2003.

A TMAC member has been asked to serve as a guest on-site review team member at a school in Perth, Australia.

Schedule of upcoming accreditation activities:

Regularly scheduled TMAC meetings will take place in August 2003 and March 2004.

Site visits scheduled for Fall 2003 include:

- China Medical College
- Chung Shan Medical University
- Tzu Chi University College of Medicine
- National Defense University Medical College
- Fu Jen Catholic University College of Medicine

Follow-up visits scheduled for Fall 2003 include:

- National Taiwan University College of Medicine
- National Cheng Kung University College of Medicine
- Kaohsiung Medical University
- Taipei Medical University

Possible follow-up visits to be scheduled for 2004 include:

- Chang Gung University College of Medicine
- National Yang Ming University School of Medicine
- China Medical College
- Chung Shan Medical University
- Tzu Chi University College of Medicine
- National Defense University Medical College