

# MEDICAL AND DENTAL COUNCIL

*"Guiding the Professions, Protecting the Public"*



## CORE COMPETENCIES OF A MEDICAL OR DENTAL PRACTITIONER

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## BACKGROUND

The evolving landscape of healthcare, characterised by emerging infectious diseases, the rise in non-communicable diseases, and the increasing role of technology — particularly Artificial Intelligence — has necessitated a continuous re-evaluation of medical and dental training. Additionally, global shortages in the healthcare workforce, trans-border migration of professionals, and a well-informed public that demands people-centred, ethical, and high-quality healthcare further emphasised the need for a dynamic, competency-based approach to medical and dental education.

Recognising these challenges, the Medical and Dental Council of Ghana took a strategic initiative to collaborate with key academic institutions, including the University of Ghana Medical and Dental Schools and the School of Health Sciences, University of Manchester, United Kingdom. This initiative, funded by the International Science Partnership Fund of the University of Manchester, aims to benchmark Ghana's medical and dental curricula against international standards while ensuring they remain responsive to local healthcare needs. The establishment of competency-based education hubs in both public and private medical and dental schools is a critical milestone in this effort, ensuring the production of practitioners equipped with essential competencies for contemporary healthcare practice.

The initiative was implemented in three phases. In **Phase one**, there was a start-up meeting held in Manchester, UK in February, 2024 followed by a consensus meeting held in March 2024 in Accra, bringing together stalwarts of medical and dental education, including the deans of all medical and dental schools in Ghana. The focus of this meeting was to identify the specific and core competencies that medical and dental practitioners ought to possess by the time they graduate. This foundational phase set the stage for structuring competency-based training in alignment with both national and global healthcare needs.



In June, 2024, a team from Ghana understudied the PRiME programme to obtain first hand experience of how it is delivered at the University of Manchester, UK. There was also an opportunity to share our work with others across the world at the University of Manchester, UK in September, 2024 during the University's Centenary Celebrations.

**Phase two**, conducted in November 2024, was focused on faculty development and capacity building. This phase aimed to enhance the ability of faculty members to effectively teach and impart knowledge in the light of rapid changes in disease profile, medicine, science and technology and the movement towards competency-based training.



The workshop introduced medical and dental educators drawn from various medical and dental schools and departments to the University of Manchester's PRiME Staff Development Programme. Discussions at the workshop covered key aspects of competency-based medical and dental education, including the West Africa Health Organisation's (WAHO) and World Health Organisation's (WHO) frameworks and rationale for competency-based medical and dental education, the role of clinical placement supervisors, and the teaching of clinical reasoning. This faculty development effort was crucial in ensuring that medical and dental educators are well-equipped to train future practitioners effectively.

**Phase three** sought to consolidate the gains from the first two phases and present the draft core competency standards (*referred to as core competencies*) for Ghanaian medical and dental graduates to participants for final edit and validation. It also sought to focus on the research component of the initiative.



The core competencies as outlined in this document reflect a structured approach to equipping our graduates with the requisite skills as future leaders and managers of the healthcare system. This set of core competencies aligns with international best practices while addressing Ghana's unique healthcare challenges thereby fostering a more globalised (*local quality, global standard*) health workforce that is equipped with globally relevant and locally responsive knowledge and skills. Emphasis is placed on fostering professionalism & ethics; scholarly & research work; team-based care; people-centred skills; and global health perspectives, thereby preparing physicians and dentists to navigate the evolving complexities of modern medical and dental practice both locally and globally.

Through these efforts, the Medical and Dental Council seeks to uphold the highest standards in medical and dental training, ultimately ensuring quality and safe healthcare delivery and improved patient outcomes in Ghana and beyond.

## THE CORE COMPETENCIES

The Medical and Dental Council in accordance with its object under **Section 26 of Part II of the Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013 (Act 857)**, in order to secure in the public interest, the highest standards in the training and practice of medicine and dentistry in Ghana, expects graduates wishing to practice medicine or dentistry in Ghana to possess the following **Core Competencies** at graduation:

### 1. CLINICAL AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

- a. Apply biomedical scientific principles, methods and knowledge to medical practice and integrate these into patient care. This must include principles and knowledge relating to anatomy, biochemistry, cell biology, genetics, genomics and personalised medicine, immunology, microbiology, molecular biology, nutrition, pathology, pharmacology and clinical pharmacology, and physiology.
- b. Apply the principles, methods and knowledge of population health and the improvement of health and sustainable healthcare to medical practice.
- c. Carry out an effective consultation with a patient.
- d. Demonstrate how patient care is delivered in the health service.
- e. Demonstrate that they can make appropriate clinical judgements when considering or providing compassionate interventions or support for patients who are nearing or at the end of life. They must understand the need to involve patients, their relatives, carers or other advocates in management decisions, making referrals and seeking advice from colleagues as appropriate.
- f. Explain and illustrate by professional experience the principles for the identification, safe management and referral of patients with mental health conditions.
- g. Give immediate care to adults, children and young people in medical and psychiatric emergencies and seek support from colleagues if necessary.
- h. Newly qualified doctors must, wherever possible, support and facilitate patients to make decisions about their care and management.
- i. Perform the core set of practical skills and procedures safely and effectively, and identify, according to their level of skill and experience, the procedures for which they need supervision to ensure patient safety.

- j. Prescribe medications safely, appropriately, effectively and economically and be aware of the common causes and consequences of prescribing errors.
- k. Recognise and identify factors that suggest patient vulnerability and take action in response.
- l. Recognise when a patient is deteriorating and take appropriate action.
- m. Use information effectively and safely in a medical context, and maintain accurate, legible, contemporaneous and comprehensive medical records.
- n. Work collaboratively with patients and colleagues to diagnose and manage clinical presentations safely in community, primary and secondary care settings and in patients' homes.
- o. Work collaboratively with patients, their relatives, carers or other advocates to make clinical judgements and decisions based on a holistic assessment of the patient and their needs, priorities and concerns, and appreciating the importance of the links between pathophysiological, psychological, spiritual, religious, social and cultural factors for each individual.

## 2. **COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES**

- a. Communicate effectively, openly and honestly with patients, their relatives, carers or other advocates, and with colleagues, applying patient confidentiality appropriately.
- b. Comprehensively document and appropriately share written and electronic information about the medical encounter to optimise clinical decision-making and patient safety, confidentiality, and privacy.
- c. Demonstrate language skills. This must include communicating in local or French language where appropriate.
- d. Elicit and synthesise accurate and relevant information, incorporating the perspectives of patients and their families or other advocates.
- e. Engage patients and their families in developing plans that reflect the patient's health care needs and goals.
- f. Establish professional therapeutic relationships with patients, their families, and carers.
- g. Share health care information and plans with patients and their families.

### 3. **ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES**

- a. Demonstrate knowledge in procurement practices.
- b. Develop ethically appropriate business plans for healthcare ventures including private-for-profit, public-private-partnership and private-not-for-profit.
- c. Manage, especially public finances effectively, including budgeting, forecasting, and resource allocation.
- d. Understand how to set up and manage private practice.

### 4. **GLOBAL HEALTH COMPETENCIES**

- a. Adapt to different healthcare settings, including resource-limited environments.
- b. Demonstrate knowledge of environmental sustainability and the impact on healthcare.
- c. Demonstrate knowledge of the principles of the legal framework in which medicine is practised in the jurisdiction in which they are practising, and have awareness of where further information on relevant legislation can be found.
- d. Develop partnerships and collaborations with global healthcare professionals and organisations.
- e. Recognise that there are differences in healthcare systems, policies, and financing models across the globe and know how to access information about the different systems, including the role of private health services.
- f. Understand and apply global health ethics principles, including respect for human rights and dignity.
- g. Understand global health issues, including infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, health disparities and public health emergency response arising as a result of epidemics and natural disasters. This must include being flexible in responding to changing global health needs and priorities and demonstrating resilience in the face of challenges and uncertainties.
- h. Understand the role of technology in global healthcare, including biotechnology, telemedicine, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and electronic health records and analyse and interpret global health data to inform decision-making.

## 5. **HEALTH ADVOCACY COMPETENCIES**

- a. Demonstrate awareness and respect for diverse cultural beliefs, values, and practices.
- b. Develop partnerships with community organisations, healthcare providers, and stakeholders to improve health outcomes.
- c. Encourage healthy behaviours, disease prevention, and early detection.
- d. Provide accurate, unbiased, and culturally sensitive health information to patients, families, and communities.
- e. Respond to an individual patient's health needs by advocating with the patient within and beyond the clinical environment.
- f. Respond to the needs of the communities or populations they serve by advocating with them for system-level change in a socially accountable manner.

## 6. **LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES**

- a. Contribute to the improvement of health care delivery in teams, organisations, and systems.
- b. Demonstrate good stewardship of health care resources.
- c. Demonstrate leadership in professional practice.
- d. Demonstrate self-awareness, empathy, and social skills to effectively manage conflicts and build strong relationships.
- e. Develop and implement strategies to achieve team and organisational goals.
- f. Recognise the role of doctors in contributing to the management and leadership of the health service.
- g. Understand the healthcare system, their responsibilities and how they fit in.

## 7. **PEOPLE-CENTRED COMPETENCIES**

- a. Apply social science principles, methods and knowledge to medical practice and integrate these into patient care.
- b. Incorporate a holistic approach to health. This must include providing socio-culturally sensitive, respectful and compassionate care.
- c. Provide and promote patient-centric care. This must include engaging patients in decision-making processes, considering their values, preferences, beliefs and needs.



- d. Support patients' right to make informed decisions about their care, respecting their values, beliefs and preferences. This must include promoting individual and community agency.

## 8. **PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICS COMPETENCIES**

- a. Demonstrate a commitment to patients by applying best practices and working within the limits of competence and scope of practice. They must participate in and promote activity to improve the quality and safety of patient care and clinical outcomes.
- b. Demonstrate a commitment to physician health and well-being by proactively managing their own physical and mental stresses in order to foster optimal patient care.
- c. Demonstrate a commitment to society by recognising and responding to societal expectations in health care.
- d. Demonstrate a commitment to the profession, by adhering to high standards of professional integrity and ethical conduct and participating in physician-led regulation.
- e. Demonstrate awareness of the importance of their personal physical and mental wellbeing and incorporate compassionate self-care into their personal and professional life.
- f. Recognise complexity and uncertainty and, through the process of seeking support and help from colleagues, learn to develop confidence in managing these situations and responding to change.
- g. Take responsibility for actions, decisions, and outcomes, and be transparent in all interactions.

## 9. **SCHOLARLY AND RESEARCH COMPETENCIES**

- a. Apply scientific methods and approaches to medical research and integrate these with a range of sources of information used to make evidence-based decisions for care.
- b. Contribute to the creation and dissemination of knowledge and practices applicable to health.
- c. Engage in the continuous enhancement of their professional activities through ongoing learning.

- d. Reflect on research experiences and identify areas for improvement.
- e. Uphold the highest standards of research ethics and integrity in all research activities.

## 10. **TEAM-BASED CARE COMPETENCIES**

- a. Hand over the care of a patient to another health care professional to facilitate continuity of safe patient care.
- b. Learn and work effectively within a multi-professional and multi-disciplinary team and across multiple care settings. This includes working face to face and through written and electronic means, and in a range of settings where patients receive care, including community, primary, secondary, mental health, specialist tertiary and social care settings and in patients' homes.
- c. Work with physicians and other colleagues in the health care professions to promote understanding, constructively manage tensions and differences, and resolve conflicts.

## **REFERENCES**

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