

Maintenance of Professional Competence

Information for Patients



Comhairle na nDochtúirí Leighis
Medical Council

Professional Competence
Reaching for Improvement



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What is professional competence?

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In the medical profession, 'professional competence' means that a doctor or other medical professional has been educated and trained and is skilled to do their job to acceptable standards. Maintenance of professional competence is a way to make sure that doctors registered in Ireland keep up to date with their education, knowledge and skills. This helps to ensure that you, as a patient, get care which is safe, personal and clinically sound. In the past, maintenance of professional competence was a voluntary practice. That has now changed. Since May 2011, there is a legal duty for all doctors registered in Ireland to show that they are maintaining their professional competence. The Medical Council oversees this new duty.

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Who does it apply to?

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All doctors registered with the Medical Council to practise in Ireland now have a legal duty to maintain their professional competence. They will do this by enrolling in a professional competence scheme and taking part in professional competence activities which are relevant to their work. The rules apply to ALL doctors – for example, GPs, hospital doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists and eye doctors.



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What will my doctor have to do?

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Doctors will be enrolled in professional competence schemes which are operated by a postgraduate medical training body, for example, the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, the Irish College of General Practitioners and so on. They will be required to take part in Continuing Professional Development and Clinical Audit activities.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE

- Maintenance of Knowledge and Skills (for example, attending professional meetings, seminars and medically related education courses and so on)
- Practice Evaluation and Development activities (for example, chart reviews, case presentations, peer review groups, and so on)
- Personal learning activities (for example, reading medical publications)
- Research and teaching
- Completion of a clinical skills checklist to see how the care the doctor provides compares with standards with a view to improving quality.

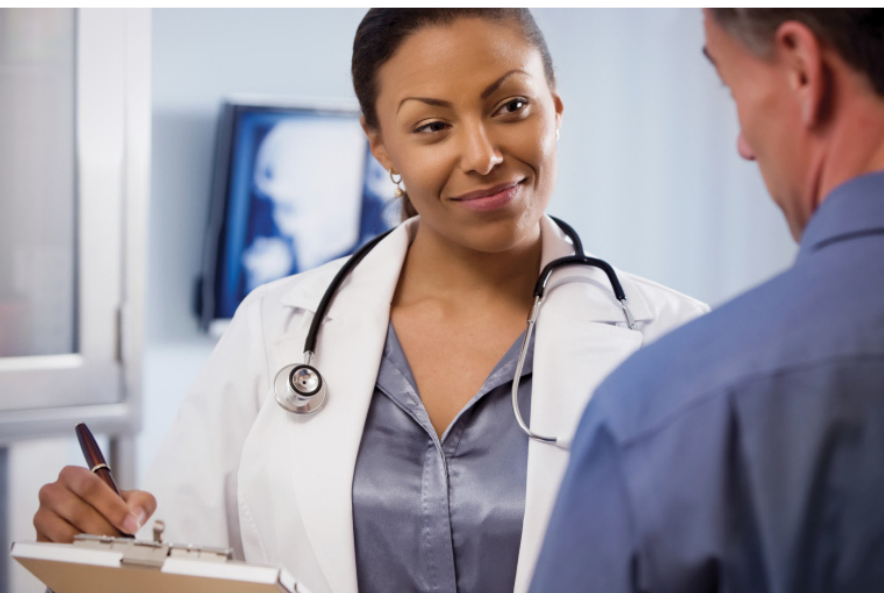
All of these activities must be approved by the postgraduate training body.

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How will this affect me?

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The patient-doctor relationship is an important one that depends on your trust in the doctor's professionalism. Maintenance of professional competence provides reassurance that your doctor is keeping their knowledge and skills up to date. This will help you to maintain your trust in your doctor.

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How will this improve patient safety?

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Good professional practice is focused on patient safety and quality of care. Maintenance of professional competence means that doctors have a legal duty to engage in lifelong learning and skills development which drives good professional practice and standards. Good professional practice does not just mean having the medical skills to treat you; it also means that your doctor has communication and interpersonal skills which help them to relate to you, the patient. While no system can eliminate human error, maintenance of professional competence is an important step in ensuring high standards of patient care.

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How will I know my doctor is complying?

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From May 2012, each doctor registered with the Medical Council will receive a certificate outlining that they have fulfilled the previous year's professional competence requirements. All certificates will have the symbol below and you can check with your doctor that they have complied with their legal duty. The Medical Council will have a monitoring system in place to make sure that professional competence is being maintained by doctors. Each year, the Council will choose a random sample of doctors for more detailed inspection. It will take action if it is not satisfied that a doctor is maintaining professional competence.



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To find out more about the role of the Medical Council and to read further detailed information about professional competence, visit our website www.medicalcouncil.ie. You can contact us at: 01 498 3100 or info@mcirl.ie