

Preface

Physicians are trained in more than 2500 medical schools in more than 150 countries throughout the world. These medical schools are heterogeneous—with different cultural contexts, different entry criteria, different curricula, different assessments, different languages, and different graduation criteria. Each year, thousands of medical graduates trained in these highly diverse contexts seek residency positions in the United States. For these individuals, the transition to residency training in the United States can bring enhanced opportunities for professional fulfillment and yet also many challenges. *International Medical Graduate Physicians: A Guide to Psychiatric Training* is a volume created by psychiatric educators with the intention of supporting the success of international medical graduate physicians as they complete their training and enter the physician workforce as psychiatrists in the United States.

International medical graduate physicians, a term used to describe individuals who have completed their undergraduate medical education in accredited schools outside of the United States, made up 25 % of all matched first-year residents in the Graduate Medical Education programs in the United States in 2016. As a vast and heterogeneous group of physicians-in-training, international medical graduate physicians who seek postgraduate residency and fellowship education in the United States can be understood as falling into three general groups. The first is the set of physicians who have already specialized in psychiatry and wish to pursue additional or subspecialized training. The second group includes those who have been trained primarily in medical and surgical fields and choose to change their career direction. The third group consists of those who decide on a career in psychiatry as medical students and, due to the lack of opportunities for psychiatric training in their native lands, migrate to the United States.

Physicians in all three groups must gain familiarity with the US health system and often must revise their preconceived ideas about what living and training in the United States will be like. They may have to learn a new language, master a new culture, and acquire knowledge of a new medical discipline. Some of these physicians may have come from countries with crushing poverty and may have very few resources in comparison with their medical graduate peers from the United States. Depending on their previous educational experiences, physicians in each of the three

groups will need to acquire new knowledge of psychiatry as it is practiced in the United States. International medical graduate physicians entering psychiatry may also experience self-doubt or be confronted by concerns from their loved ones because of the stigma associated with the field, which is very strong in some countries.

Once these aspiring international physicians enter the United States, they need correct and unbiased information on residency training to be well positioned to make the best possible decisions for their futures. For example, in many countries, medical education only occurs in university settings. Community-based residency programs, which exist in the United States, may represent an excellent choice for furthering their education, and yet this training model may be unfamiliar to them. The idea of receiving certification in psychiatry from a separate entity through the American Board of Medical Specialties or its representative American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology also may be novel to many. The role of other professional organizations, such as the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, in setting training requirements for specialist physicians may also not be common knowledge. Moreover, many international medical graduate physicians receive little to no instruction in professional ethics in their medical schools, and the entire medical care system, which is based on commercial insurers, Medicare, and Medicaid, is difficult to comprehend. Finally, the twin ideas of responsibility and accountability—and harsher measures such as malpractice for negligent actions—can generate enormous anxiety for physicians adapting to the health system in the United States. This book is intended to address these and other issues of importance to international medical graduate physicians in psychiatry training.

International Medical Graduate Physicians: A Guide to Psychiatric Training is replete with perspectives, reflections, and valuable information for the reader. Many of the chapters are based on the life experience of the international physician-authors, and we appreciate that their experiences and opinions may differ from those of the readers—and the editors—of this book. We are grateful to all the contributors for sharing their wisdom and experience. We hope that this guide will be of value to international physicians and to their teachers and supervisors in psychiatry.

Our world faces many complex issues as the current pattern of globalization evolves in medicine. Many of these issues, such as the facts of health disparities, the influence of commercial industry and public policy, and the impact of war and conflict, of necessity fall outside the scope of this text. The momentum of these complex issues is increasingly felt in the lives of all people, including physicians-in-training and physicians, and should be considered as context by the readers of this book.

International physicians have brought and will continue to bring great strengths to the psychiatry workforce of the United States. They perform immense service in this country, and they provide care for people living with mental illness, in both rural and urban settings. We are honored and pleased to publish this volume to address the issues and experiences of international medical graduate physicians. We thank our colleagues for their contributions and hope that this guide will further their sense of fulfillment and success in their professional work.

East Meadow, NY
Stanford, CA

Nyapati R. Rao, M.D., M.S.
Laura Weiss Roberts, M.D., M.A.

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