

# The European Diploma of Internal Medicine: Perspectives on the exam from across Europe

## Young Internists of EFIM Survey: January 2009

The European Federation of Internal Medicine (EFIM) Competencies Working-Group meeting was held in Dublin last autumn. During this meeting the subject of the European Diploma of Medicine was discussed. The diploma (EDIM) has faced certain challenges as it is rolled out across Europe and there has been less take-up of the exam than EFIM would like to see. Prof. Stefan Lindgren, as the chairperson of the Competencies Working-Group, has asked the Young Internists to look into this using a network of trainees in Internal Medicine that the Young Internists has been building. Potentially this survey may help to inform the future development of the diploma as a European standard for Internal Medicine.

The survey was conducted using an on-line form that was compiled and produced by the Young Internists with the help of Prof. Stefan Lindgren and Adrian Stevens. A total of 658 survey requests were sent to trainees in Internal Medicine across Europe from a database compiled by the Young Internists. The Survey was run for a one-month period from 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008 through to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. The results are presented here with the questionnaire, comments and list of contributors attached as appendices.

### RESULTS:

Number of survey e-mails sent: 658  
Responses: 220 (34%)

Demographics: M: F 1.1:1 (116:104)  
Age (Range) 25-59  
(Mean) 32

Position of respondents:

Consultant	38
Resident	89
Registrar	37
Intern	24
House Officer	1
Other / Medical	29

Note: Residents and Registrars are both terms which describe doctors at the same level of training i.e. who are working towards a specialty qualification such as Internal Medicine.

**Questions about the European Diploma of Internal Medicine** (see appendix 1)

1. Where you aware of the exam?  
YES: 173 (78.6%)      NO: 47 (21.4%)
2. Have you taken the Exam?  
YES: 7 (3.2%)      NO: 213 (96.8%)
3. Have you considered taking the exam?  
YES: 148 (67.3%)      NO: 72 (32.7%)
4. Are you aware that it is like MRCP (UK) - Part 2  
YES: 71 (32.7%)      NO: 146 (67.3%)
5. Do you think the exam would be useful to you?  
YES: 168 (77.1%)      NO: 50 (22.9%)
6. What are the Positive Points? (YES responses out of 220)
  - a. It's a high quality exam 87 (39.5%)
  - b. It can be a reason to update my knowledge 141 (64.1%)
  - c. It can be of help to see where my IM knowledge stands in the EC 152 (69.1%)
  - d. It can be of help to have it in my CV 140 (63.6%)
7. What are the Negative Points? (YES responses out of 220)
  - a. It doesn't have validity in Europe 31 (14.1%)
  - b. It doesn't help me to apply for a position in another country 27 (12.3%)
  - c. The application fee is too high 50 (22.7%)
  - d. Content of the questions does not reflect the scope of my training curriculum 6 (2.7%)
  - e. The exam centres are too far to travel to 44 (20%)
  - f. British Council buildings are not appropriate to sit the exam 8 (3.6%)
  - g. My English language is not sufficient to answer the questions 16 (7.3%)
  - h. I don't or didn't have time 58 (26.4%)
  - i. I have never heard about it 33 (15%)
  - j. I simply haven't thought about it 34 (15.5%)

8. Would you apply to take the examination, if it was:
- a. Held in your Country?  
YES: 181 (88.7%)      NO: 23 (11.3%)
  - b. Valid across Europe?  
YES: 181 (91.9%)      NO: 16 (31.1%)
  - c. Cheaper?  
YES: 169 (89.9%)      NO: 19 (10.1%)
  - d. In your own language?  
YES: 137 (71.7%)      NO: 54 (28.3%)
  - e. Endorsed / Supported by your National Society?  
YES: 184 (94.4%)      NO: 11 (5.6%)
- 

**Discussion:**

Out of 658 questionnaires sent out, a total of 220 responses were collected (34% response rate). Although a 78.6% of respondents to this survey were aware of the exam and 77% thought it would be useful to them, only 7 out of 220 had actually taken it. Around two thirds of all respondents felt that the exam would be a good way to update knowledge, improve the CV and get an idea of where they stood within the European community. The major reasons given for not taking the exam were lack of information, lack of time, expense and concern about its validity across Europe. This was also reflected in the comments sent in. 94.4% of those who responded said that they would apply to take the exam if it was endorsed by their national society. Much of the feedback revolved around the fact that the EDIM exam was based on the MRCP Part 2 exam and this may have stopped some UK graduates from applying. We have left the comments below unedited and unabbreviated to allow the exam board to assess the major concerns. The overall sense is that there is agreement that an exam such as the EDIM is a good idea and would help in certain circumstances but considerable energy may be required to distribute information about the exam and possible to make it available in local centres. Most importantly the 'validity' of the exam across Europe is a matter of concern for many trainees who already have other exams to study and to pay for. We believe that in view of the high percentages of people that would consider sitting the exam, it may be reasonable to reintroduce it in the future after assuring its acceptance on national levels, and its availability to participants.

We would like to express our greatest thanks to Adrian Stevens for his help with this survey and to all the Young Internists who responded. We hope that this is the start of a useful discussion and a step closer to removing barriers and boundaries between Internal Medicine trainees across Europe.

### **Comments and Feedback from respondents:**

I want to take the exam, but I was told that I am not eligible, because I am not from European countries.

If it has better recognition in my country (UK), more residents may be interested to take it

I think that the reason for possible low application rates for certain areas may be lack of clear advantage of this diploma for official certification of medicine knowledge in Europe. This is not like American board certification. It just shows your knowledge is sufficient to work in Europe as an internist, does not give you opportunities like training across Europe despite high cost. So taking this exam does not pass beyond satisfying yourself that your knowledge is comparable to that of colleagues' across Europe and being a matter of prestige which even mostly not to be notified in CVs'.

I think diploma must give test takers to some advantages and a validation or clear status of this diploma must be determined.

The Israeli Society of Internal Medicine will never let a young internist to work in Europe because we have a lack of residents in this branch.

Great job, guys!

I still would apply if it wasn't supported by my National Society, and I'm not sure it should. The validation across Europe, the high quality so it may be a really good thing for our curriculum and a way to improve our careers probably are more important.

I think that national societies should let their members know about the exam (in Italy almost nobody knows about it!)

In the United States, we already have the USMLE tests, followed by board certification tests thru the ABIM and 10 year recertification, which I feel is adequate testing to reinforce my internal medicine skills. Unfortunately this exam is not valid in Europe and doesn't give me a possibility to work in Europe.

For trainees in the UK, passing the MRCP diploma is mandatory. Therefore, there is no point in UK trainees doing the MRCP Pt 2 paper a second time just to get a diploma that in effect means very little. It may not be feasible, but candidates with the full MRCP diploma should not have to do the EFIM exam to get the diploma - they should get it automatically. Perhaps this will also encourage more European trainees to do the whole MRCP diploma. As an exam, this would be much more of a thorough and complete test.

I don't believe the MRCP part2 (we have the exact same format in Ireland) is the correct format for this exam. This was a wasted opportunity to develop a relevant diploma examination which is far more relevant to real clinical practice than the MRCP (UK or I)-why would someone do the essentially the same exam twice???

I have sat the complete MRCP (UK) exam, therefore the European diploma offers me know extra benefit.

Why not make MRCP part II an alternative and allow the RCP to issue the diploma?

I am a Bangladeshi doctor working in a big Hospital of Saudi Arabia. I have already passed the MRCP (UK) examination. Now I am considering taking in EDIM Exam. Would you please tell me whether this exam needs specific hospitals training or any hospital training will be valid. Do you think I will get extra Professional benefit in Europe after completion of EDIM though already I have MRCP (UK) qualification?

I already have MRCP (UK) and don't see any reason why I should sit in MRCP part 2 again for EDIM. I think it would be worthwhile giving people a choice when they give MRCP part 2 that they can either pay more (to MRCP + EFIM) and if they pass MRCP part 2 then have both European diploma and obviously MRCP Part2(UK).As for people who already have passed PACES, there is no incentive to sit this exam so maybe all they should be required to do now is pay the exam fee and have evidence of working in training job in UK.....just a thought.

I already have the MRCP. In the UK PMETB are already introducing further post graduate exams of MRCP II level and these cost £800 a shot. There are just too many exams and they all seem to be reproducing the same things. I'm not sure what this exam would give me that the MRCP has not? Nor do I know how much it is.

We already have MRCP as a mandatory qualification during the specialist training in which case EDIM doesn't help

I would like to have a copy of the last exam. I have no idea about what kind of exam EDIM is. For me, to say that it is "like MRCP (UK) - Part II" means nothing because I have never heard about MRCP.

I think it should be in English language, anyway.

In Britain our registrar training requires us to take an exam in our chosen speciality as of 2008 and therefore this reduces my enthusiasm to sit another exam!

Exams like this should be more available and to some degree more compulsory around the European countries.

Right now the EDIM offers no added benefit over the Swiss national internal medicine diploma. The EU rules of accepting national diplomas make the EDIM redundant

Unfortunately, international exams don't seem to be valued much by German consultants thus not very useful as long as I practice here. I am currently preparing the EDIC exam without great expectations that it will be appreciated.

I would like to take it. I think these test are expensive. In Spain the national board is very cheap and it helps in trying it although you haven't studied hard enough. Even if you haven't study you can pass if

you reach the score. I think if the fee is cheaper the people would take it without considering the price and the time to study. On the other hand I strongly suggest not to change the language otherwise there will be people with medical skills but without the common medical language that will make easier to work abroad.

The main disadvantage is the limited validity not language or price.

I think that the EDIM has no extra value is you cannot work in the whole 'world' with it. If someone would like to work in the USA, he's still has to pass the American exam. In my opinion it would be more useful to use the American exam to give you the EDIM and possibility to work 'everywhere'.

It will be good if the applicants could take the exam at anytime during their residency and not just 2 years prior to certification.

I wanted to take the exam but there is a limitation, you are supposed to complete 2 years of training in Internal Medicine before you apply (am I right?),and I am just on the first...

I think that the main point is that this exam is not required for applying for a position. For applying for a internist position in Spain I just need my official specialist title issued by Spanish Government. If every specialist would require this exam in all Europe it would be ok, but I can't find the point in making an exam (quite time and resources-consuming) just for show

I would like to do the exam especially to test and update my knowledge; to have one more item in my CV is not so relevant for me. Unfortunately it requires some time to preparation, and when we are already working every day, as I am, it's very difficult.

Si con este examen se pretenden abrir puertas, la centralización del examen en Gran Bretaña, esta consiguiendo lo contrario y desmotivando a la mayoría. Además poniendo en tela de juicio una sociedad (EFIM) que debería ser "EUROPEA": "NO INGLESA".

I am Polish; I have been working as a doctor in France for the last 5 years. Indeed, I'd rather take this exam in French or Polish. I speak English but, in my opinion, not good enough to pass an exam.

I think it would be a good idea as long as it is recognised in other countries in Europe.

It has to be an exam that crosses every country training program so everyone would stand equally prepared for it

It has been difficult for me to exactly understand what kind of knowledge I would need for the exam. I am not familiar with any British exam. Moreover it is not nice to travel to any place without a plan to prepare for the exam.

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

### Survey on European Diploma of Internal Medicine

1. Country:
2. Current position:
3. Age:
4.  F       M
5. Have you heard about the European Diploma of Internal Medicine Exam?  Yes       No
6. Did you take it?  Yes       No
7. If no, have you ever considered taking it?  Yes       No
8. Did you know that EDIM examination is MRCP (Part II) of UK?  Yes       No
9. Do you think that taking the Diploma would be useful for you?  Yes       No
10. What do you think the positive points about EDIM Exam are?
  - It's a high quality examination
  - It can be a reason to update my knowledge
  - It can be of help to see where my internal medicine knowledge stands in the European medical community
  - It can be of help to have it in my CV while applying for positions
11. If you haven't take/ don't consider taking it, why?
  - It doesn't have validity in Europe
  - It doesn't help me to apply for a position in another European country
  - The application fee is too high
  - The content of the questions does not reflect the scope my training curriculum
  - The examination centers are far to travel
  - British Council buildings are not appropriate to sit the exam
  - My English language is not sufficient enough to understand and answer the questions
  - I don't/ didn't have time
  - I have never heard about it
  - Simply I haven't thought about it
12. Would you apply to take the examination, if it was;
  - Held in your country       Yes       No
  - Valid across Europe  Yes       No
  - Cheaper       Yes       No
  - In your own language       Yes       No
  - Announced by your National Society of Internal Medicine  Yes       N

## Appendix 2. With thanks to contributions from:

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