

General Internal Medicine Subspecialty Training Update

(updated July 8, 2015)

The vast majority of General Internal Medicine (GIM) programs in Canada have become distinct entities that provide training in additional competencies and leadership above and beyond those required for the specialty of Internal Medicine. In December 2010, after many years of effort, General Internal Medicine finally achieved recognition as a distinct subspecialty by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. All documentation (objectives of training, specialty training requirements, specific standards of accreditation) for the “new” two year training program in GIM has now been approved by the Royal College.

GIM subspecialty programs are poised to train physician-leaders who will address the health care challenges of the future, including an aging population, patients with multiple comorbidities and simultaneous health care issues, and the need for health care innovation. This mandate is summarized in the following excerpt from the Objectives of Training in General Internal Medicine (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada [website](#)).

General Internal Medicine is a subspecialty of Internal Medicine which embraces the values of generalism, is aligned with population needs, and promotes the practitioner’s ability to adapt their practice profile when population needs change. General Internists are prepared to diagnose and manage patients with common and emergency internal medicine conditions, and are able to do so when the individual has multiple conditions and with limited access to other subspecialists. General Internists provide comprehensive care of the adult patient in an integrated fashion as opposed to an organ-centred or disease-centred approach. They are prepared to maintain stability of patients with multisystem disorders over the long-term or during physiological stresses such as during pregnancy or the peri-operative period. General Internists advocate for their individual patients as well as for all patients within complex healthcare delivery systems, by aiming to optimize and not maximize care, including prevention of other conditions. General Internists recognize that the practice of medicine is tightly linked to the art and science of health care delivery and, by virtue of their pivotal role are uniquely placed to engage in quality improvement, patient safety, and healthcare systems initiatives.

The active programs can be found through the CARMs website and/or the Royal College Accredited Programs website.

<https://www.carms.ca/en/medicine-subspecialty>

http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/credentials/accreditation/arps/specialty/gen_internal_medicine

GIM Training FAQ:

What are the Objectives of Training for the new two-year General Internal Medicine program?

The full General Internal Medicine objectives may be found on the Royal College website: http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/credentials/specialty_information Under “Information by Subspecialty,” select “General Internal Medicine (GIM)”

The medical expert objectives are centered on the pillars of GIM. They include but are not limited to:

- a. Common and emergency Internal Medicine disorders in the outpatient and inpatient setting, including when there is limited access to other subspecialists. This includes presentations of illness that are multisystem and undifferentiated. It also includes the ability to independently stabilize critically ill patients.
- b. Internal Medicine conditions before, during, and after pregnancy.
- c. Chronic multi-system disease such as but not limited to diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dyslipidemia and chronic kidney disease.
- d. Multiple internal medicine co-morbidities in the perioperative period – both in terms of preoperative risk stratification and management of postoperative problems related to General Internal Medicine.

Procedural skills in exercise stress testing, ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, Holter monitor interpretation, and mechanical and non-invasive ventilation will be needed by all. Each individual resident may have a different list of additional procedural skills that should be attained. Structure is built into the residency program to allow this flexibility. Defining which procedural skills you need for your practice on an ongoing basis is a key competency to be attained.

Key items being emphasized in other competencies include those needed in the increasingly complex health care system: handover; inter- and intra-professional collaboration; practice audits and ability to adapt practice; behavioural modification; practice management; patient safety; and knowledge of when to seek assistance.

What are the Training Requirements in the Two-Year GIM Program?

The specialty training requirements emphasize that GIM will be a two-year training program that is planned in a longitudinal fashion with increased graded responsibility over the two years, not two consecutive years with similar content in each year. Key components include 15 blocks of clinical rotations primarily in GIM that may include consultative medicine, perioperative medicine, community GIM, preceptorships, CTU, obstetrical medicine, ambulatory care, and critical care. The other 11 selective blocks can focus on development of clinical skills, scholarly skills, or a combination of both. Flexibility has been built in to allow individual GIM programs to tailor the specific details to their sites.

How do I apply for GIM Subspecialty training?

Applications for GIM Subspecialty training take place through the CaRMS Medical Subspecialty Match. Information about GIM programs and contact information for GIM Program Directors can be found on the CaRMS website at:

<http://www.carms.ca/en/residency/msm/>

What will happen to certification in the specialty of Internal Medicine?

No changes in the current path to certification in the specialty of Internal Medicine are anticipated. The written and oral exam in Internal Medicine will continue to be offered to individuals who are completing their 4th year of internal medicine training.

Will every internal medicine program offer a GIM subspecialty program?

Each university has the option to offer both a five-year GIM subspecialty training program and a four-year Internal Medicine specialty training program, or to continue with only the existing four-year Internal Medicine specialty training program. You can determine which universities offer which either on the CaRMS website:

<http://www.carms.ca/en/residency/msm/>

Or the Royal College website (accredited residency programs)

http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/credentials/accreditation/arps/specialty/gen_internal_medicine

Check frequently – Accredited GIM programs are rapidly growing!

What is the purpose of the GIM exam?

In 2010, the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) officially recognized General Internal Medicine (GIM) as a new subspecialty within the existing specialty of Internal Medicine. In every subspecialty, RCPSC certification is obtained only by examination. Hence, physicians who wish to be certified by the RCPSC in the subspecialty of GIM need to pass the newly-created GIM written exam.

Who is eligible to write the GIM exam?

Access to the GIM Exam is via two routes:

- a. The traditional (residency) route – this is the route to the examination when an applicant completes accredited residency training. i.e. for current GIM residents.
- b. The Practice Eligibility Route (PER – Sub) was established to provide access to Royal College credentials (via examination) for those who started practice PRIOR to accredited training existing. The PER Sub route is open indefinitely to those who have 5 years of GIM practice and clearly started practice prior to GIM programs existing.

For details, refer to this [RCPSC document](#).

I am a General Internist who has been in practice for five years or more, and started practice prior to GIM training existing. How do I apply to take the GIM exam?

You will need to go through the [Practice Eligibility Route for subspecialists \(PER-sub\)](#) process. PER-sub assesses whether your scope of practice, education, and supporting documentation will grant you eligibility to the certification examinations. Success on this assessment provides you with eligibility for 3 consecutive attempts to the subspecialty certification examination. Certification is only granted after success at the examination.

I recently graduated from a two-year GIM subspecialty training program. Can I apply now to take the GIM exam?

Retroactive accreditation of your training may or may not apply depending on the specifics of your training program. If you are in this situation and wish to write the GIM exam, you should speak to your GIM Program Director.

I am currently a trainee in a two-year GIM subspecialty training program. Will I be eligible to take the GIM exam?

This question should be directed to your GIM Program Director. In most cases, the answer will be yes. You will need to submit an [Application for Assessment of Canadian Residency Training](#) before the application deadline for the GIM exam (see below).

I am a general internist who has been in practice for less than five years, and started in practice prior to accredited GIM training existing. I completed four years of residency training in internal medicine. Can I apply now to take the GIM exam?

No. General internists who have been in practice for less than five years, started practice prior to accredited GIM training existing, and who did not go through a RCPSC-accredited two-year GIM subspecialty training program will have to wait until they have been in practice for at least five years before they can apply to take the GIM exam, following the PER-sub process described above.

When will the GIM exam be held?

Like all subspecialty examinations, the GIM exam will be held once yearly in the fall.

What is the deadline to apply for future GIM exams?

The deadline to apply for PER-sub or Assessment of Canadian Residency Training will be August 31st of the year before you wish to take the examination.

Once I am deemed eligible to write the GIM exam, how long do I have to actually take the exam?

Once you are deemed eligible by the RCPSC to write the GIM exam, your eligibility is valid for three consecutive years.

What will I need to do to maintain my certification in GIM?

You must complete Royal College CPD cycles every 5 years to maintain your status as a Royal College certified subspecialist in GIM.

Can I be “grandfathered” into the subspecialty of GIM?

No. The RCPSC has a longstanding policy that physicians cannot be “grandfathered” into a new subspecialty. For physicians who are RCPSC-certified in the specialty of Internal Medicine, the only way that they can obtain RCPSC certification in the subspecialty of GIM is to take the new GIM written exam. There are no exceptions to this rule.

If I do not take the GIM exam, can I still call myself a “general internist”?

Only those who are Royal College certified in General Internal Medicine may refer to themselves as being “Royal College certified” as a General Internist.

Where can I find more information about the GIM examination?

Refer to the Royal College website – under General Internal Medicine – [specific information regarding the Royal College examination](#).