

XIII The accreditation of a training programme

H.-J. Reulen

Department of Neurosurgery, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Klinikum Großhadern, Munich, Germany

General information

The U.E.M.S. has been active in the field of quality improvement of specialist training in the EU for years and has formulated general guidelines and criteria, published in the European Training Charter for Medical Specialists [1]. In accordance with these guidelines, the UEMS specialist sections develop specific recommendations to set and maintain standards of training, training quality and accreditation of training institutions for the respective speciality. Also they should monitor the contents and the quality of training. This aids harmonization of the training level in the EC. At a national level, training of medical specialists is regulated by the national authorities [1] who set standards in accordance with their national rules and EC legislation as well as in consideration of the UEMS/European Board recommendations.

An important feed-back instrumentation for quality improvement is the visitation and evaluation of training centers, which in future may be coupled with certification and recertification of trainers. At present an external evaluation of the quality of training exists in only a few of the countries of the EU, and the national approaches differ considerably. Therefore, in the UEMS, the need was felt for a harmonisation and encouragement in the field of visitation of training centers. The new *European Charter on Visitation of Training Centers*, 2002 [3] presents the outlines as to organize a national programme for visitation of training centers. The following definitions are made by the UEMS.

Statutory visitation

The responsible national authority is recommended to establish programmes for this purpose as far as these

have not been developed yet. Such programmes are increasingly required and tend to become obligatory, as is already the case in several member states of the EU.

Voluntary visitation

Training centers are encouraged to participate in voluntary visitation programmes that award additional quality titles. The UEMS European Boards are active in this field [3].

In Neurosurgery the EANS and the Section of Neurosurgery of the UEMS have entrusted the *Joint Residency Advisory and Accreditation Committee (JRAAC)* with the above task, i.e. the preparatory work for the visitation of European neurosurgical training centres. The visitation programme is now being offered on a voluntary basis for a European recognition of quality of teaching and training in Neurosurgery by the JRAAC. Training centers in Europe are encouraged to participate in such a voluntary visitation programme. Since this European visitation programme follows the highest standards, it should be secured that in the future an accreditation issued by JRAAC as an UEMS/EANS body is recognized by the national authorities.

In the following it is described how the European Accreditation of a Training Programme is organized.

The application

- a) The Programme Director must submit the *Programme Application Form* to the Secretary of the JRAAC to arrive sufficiently in advance of a Committee Meeting to allow for proper reviewing. In future a second questionnaire will have to be com-

pleted by a representative of the trainees. Applications will be evaluated within the subsequent 6 months. The Programme Application Form can be obtained from the Chairman or the Secretary of JRAAC (presently Prof. T. Trojanowski or Prof. M. Zerah, secretary) or be downloaded from the website of the EANS (www.eans.org/→committees→accreditation form).

- b) The Application Form has to be completed in detail by the applying department, describing the personnel, space, technical facilities, clinical experience available, and in particular their Residency Training Programme. The data are necessary for the Evaluation Committee to assess the status of the Residency Programme. The completed Application Form should be sent to one of the addresses given below (see Important addresses).
- c) The completed Programme Application Form will be reviewed by at least two members of the JRAAC. The reviewers may request additional material directly from the Programme Director and shall prepare a proposal for the next JRAAC committee meeting.

The site visit

- a) If the Training Programme according to the Application Form is in essential compliance with the requirements, the next step will be a *Site Visit* of the applying institution, conducted by two independent visitors (experienced chairpersons) nominated by the JRAAC, and a third national observer/visitor appointed by the applying institution. One member will act as Chairman, another as secretary. The national visitor acts as an observer, may help explain national requirements and peculiarities and should be an experienced member of the respective National Neurosurgical Society. The date of the Site Visit will be arranged between the Programme Director and the site visitors as soon as possible. The Programme Director will receive the necessary information to prepare the time table of the site visit in due time. The site visit will be performed according to the Guidelines of the UEMS Charter on Visitation of Training Centers (2002) [3]. The Site Visit preferably lasts 1 day and serves to see the hospital(s) and department(s) involved in the Training Programme and the educational and scientific environment, holding personal discussions

with the Programme Director, the Chairman, the teachers, the trainees, and a representative of the administration. A team discussion with the trainees may be helpful as well. Information given by the trainees must remain confidential. Concluding the visit, a debate with the teaching staff should take place. The time table should include a 30 minute section for the visiting team to formulate its conclusions, conditions and recommendations. Details can be added later when a report is compiled. The center being visited is responsible for the expenses of travel and local accommodation of the site visitors.

A *report* will be prepared by the site visitors for the subsequent meeting of the JRAAC. The training center should be granted an inspection of the draft of the report to correct any factual errors. The final report will be part of the final decision on the accreditation status of the Programme. Confidentiality regarding the contents of the site visitors' report must strictly be adhered to by the site visitors. All information obtained during the interviews with trainers and trainees remain absolutely confidential.

- b) The *accreditation status* as decided by the JRAAC will be reported to the respective Programme Director by formal Letter of Notification. The letter will be forwarded by the Committee Chairman within a reasonable period of time following the committee meeting. On request of the Programme Director, the Dean of the Faculty and/or authorities of the hospital also may receive the official report. Together with the report additional advice and recommendations if necessary will be given to further improve the Training Programme.

The accreditation

The following decisions may be taken by the JRAAC with regard to the accreditation status of a Training Institution and Programme.

Full accreditation (accreditation at full status) may be granted by the JRAAC if the programme has demonstrated to be in full compliance with the Essentials of the European Training Charter [1], the Essentials to Organize a Residency Training Programme [2], and the Charter on Visitation of Training Centers [3]. The Department that has been fully accredited will receive a certificate indicating that the Department and the