The Post-Graduate Training Programme for Obstetrics & Gynaecology in Malta

This programme has been drawn up by the Malta College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (MCOG) in accordance with the recommendations of the European Board and College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (EBCOG) of June 2000.

Definition of Obstetrics & Gynaecology

The speciality of Obstetrics & Gynaecology involves the supervision of and appropriate intervention during normal and complicated pregnancy and delivery, as well as the recognition, prevention, management and surveillance of diseases of reproductive organs and factors influencing female reproductive health.

Entry requirements

To join the post-graduate programme the following entry criteria must be met:

- The candidate must possess a primary medical qualification recognised by the Medical Council of Malta, and be registered with a recognised Medical Council.
- There must be a recognised substantive training post available, recognised for the purpose by the Specialist Accreditation Committee, following the appropriate selection process of trainees.

Training Principles:

- Trainees must participate in all hospital activities such as the care of out-patients and in-patients, on-call duties both during the day and night, perform deliveries and gynaecological operations and participate in educational activities, including the teaching of other health professionals. Participation in audit and clinical or basic research is also recommended.
- Arrangements for post-graduate training must be compatible with national employment legislation in relation to remuneration, hours of work and rights of employees in such matters as sick leave and maternity leave.
- The trainee must strive to complete the eligibility criteria leading to certification as a specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

Satisfactory completion of these criteria will confirm eligibility of the candidate to be recommended to the SAC to register as a Specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

This training programme applies to all training posts in Obstetrics & Gynaecology in the Maltese Islands.

Presently and in the foreseeable future these posts are funded at the Islands’ Main Teaching Hospital (at the moment of writing Mater Dei Hospital). However the College does not exclude that
other teaching hospitals which will be recognised by the competent body (presently EBCOG or RCOG) as a Teaching Hospital with post-graduate training facilities may become relevant to this document.

1. Trainees must be in possession of a recognised first degree in Medicine and Surgery, registered and be of good conduct.
2. Trainees must hold a full time remunerable post with the Hospital where the training is held.
3. The post must be a combined Obstetrics and Gynaecology post and the trainee must have full exposure to elective and emergency obstetrics and gynaecology and all the sub-specialties.
4. Their post must be full time and they have to perform on call duties at a rota of not less than 1 in 6.
5. Training should be structured throughout with clearly defined targets to be met after specified intervals. An educational plan should be drawn up by the specialist responsible for the overall training in the department and by the tutor in consultation with the trainee at the beginning of each attachment.
6. The duration of training is 5 years full time. The trainee is encouraged by the college to spend one of these years in an appropriate training post abroad which is approved by the College. This is however, not mandatory. Training posts start as Basic Specialists trainees for the first two years. The trainee is eligible to proceed to Higher Surgical training provided.
   i) He/She has satisfactorily completed the full two years of training in Obstetrics & Gynaecology as BST 1 and 2 level,
   ii) He/She has been successful in passing the MRCOG Part 1 exam or equivalent. The trainee must check equivalence with the College prior to presentation of certificates. Certificates other than MRCOG Part I will not be accepted unless there is College confirmation that this is an acceptable equivalent. Higher Specialist training is of 3 years duration.
7. The trainee has to be successful in the MRCOG Part 2 (written) exam between year 4 and 5 (or 2 and 3 as HST).
8. Progress should be monitored regularly by a formal annual assessment carried out by the College.
9. At the end of the 5 years of training the trainee has to pass the EBCOG fellowship exam or complete the MRCOG exam. As for item 7 equivalence must be confirmed beforehand and no certificates other than the above will be accepted unless accompanied by certification of equivalence from the College.
10. The trainee has to present two long essays of 5000 words each, one in Obstetrics and the other in Gynaecology. The essay title must be presented to the College and approved beforehand.
11. The conditions in the SAC document “Framework Specialist Training Programme” also apply.

At the end of the full training program and having satisfied all the above requirements the trainee will be eligible to register with the SAC as a specialist to Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

The final say regarding the above, rests with the MCOG Council or any such committee the Council may appoint from time to time to perform such duties.
Educational Objectives of Training in Obstetrics & Gynaecology

1. Aims
   - To ensure that at the time of appointment to a specialist post Obstetricians & Gynaecologists have attained standards of knowledge and specialist skills adequate to permit them to undertake fully independent clinical practice.
   - To encourage the acquisition, assessment and application of information and techniques in order to improve standards of practice.
   - To encourage the updating of knowledge and skills acquired as a result of such education and training.

Relating to Aim 1
   - To define the content of the training in a syllabus that is reviewed regularly (Appendix 1).
   - To define the clinical abilities which should be acquired by a specialist Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
   - To define the personal and professional attributes which are desirable in a specialist.
   - To organise assessment throughout the training period.
   - To ensure that individual post-graduate training programmes and assessments are supervised by a designated consultant in each training unit.

Relating to Aim 2
   - To ensure that clinical practice is based upon sound scientific principles.
   - To ensure that access to facilities for postgraduate training is provided for all trainees.
   - To ensure that assessment of training reflects new developments in the speciality.
   - To provide opportunities for recruitment into and progress within the speciality of junior doctors of high calibre.

Relating to Aim 3
   - To arrange regular meetings for critical review of new clinical and scientific developments.
   - To publicise new developments in the speciality.

2 Assessment of Training
   - Approval of training falls under the responsibility of the SAC, which has the power to withdraw recognition if necessary. The Malta College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (MCOG) will be responsible for the trainers.
• Assessment of trainees

All trainees will be formally evaluated on an annual basis. Progress during training should be recorded in a log-book, listing procedures performed and participation in teaching programmes. The College provides a log-book for this purpose. Assessment during training will be of three types:

1. Self-assessment
   Trainees should record in the log-book their confidence in performing recommended procedures, and their opinion of their interaction with their trainers.

2. Formative assessment
   Trainers should, at regular intervals, record in the log-book their assessment of the trainee’s competence in performing clinical tasks. The trainee’s interactions with patients and colleagues should also be noted.

3. Annual assessment
   Annual assessment will be carried out on all trainees and as per section 5 the trainee will be required to pass exams as stipulated.

The evaluation of the training programme will be undertaken by the Malta College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, under the auspices of the SAC. Emphasis will be given to evaluation during training rather than at the end.

3 Training Requirements

During training, it is essential to participate in a full range of clinical activities involving out-patient and in-patient management as well as emergency care. The amount of experience required in individual areas of training indicated by the numbers of procedures recommended should not be regarded as mandatory but simply as guidelines. In addition when training in certain of these techniques is not possible in an individual training centre, it is acceptable to substitute some for others or to arrange a component of training in another recognised centre.

Obstetrics

• Antenatal ultrasound examination (normal and abnormal anatomy of the fetus and high risk pregnancies): 200 abdominal examinations
• Normal labour and delivery: 100
• Assisted vaginal delivery (forceps, vacuum extractor, breech): 40
• Caesarean section: 40

Diagnostic procedures

• Colposcopy: 50
• Hysteroscopy: 25
• Gynaecological ultrasound examination and early pregnancy problems (principally by trans-vaginal ultrasound but trans-abdominal experience also required): 100
Gynaecological surgery

- Diagnostic laparoscopy: 40
- Laparoscopic surgery (ectopic pregnancy, ovarian cyst): 20
- Laparotomy/Hysterectomy: 20

Scientific communications

It is recommended that, by the end of training, each trainee will have presented at least one communication or poster at a scientific meeting and published at least one scientific paper in a peer review.

Organisation of Training

1. Post-graduate Courses

Theoretical teaching at post-graduate level will not consist entirely of a series of lectures since meetings devoted to review and discussion of research cover only part of the theoretical syllabus. Group sessions (national or international) led by a trainer with prepared contributions from trainees are valuable and will be organised so as to cover the required syllabus. Furthermore, the training centre will hold regular meetings for discussion of cases and review of morbidity and mortality, recognising that these meetings alone cannot fulfil the needs for theoretical teaching. Trainees will be entitled to have leave for attendance to approved courses and meetings, for research work and for private study.

2. Duties of Trainers

Post-graduate training will encompass all of the contents of the training syllabus (Appendix 1). Trainees will be properly supervised in their clinical practice, all the specialists of the department will be involved in the supervision of training and teaching, which is one of the duties of all clinicians working in a training hospital. Two fundamental elements will be established and will take additional responsibilities for the training program:

a) A Specialist – who is responsible for the organisation of training in the Department – the Training Co-ordinator

This person will:

- Be designated in agreement with the Head of Department following an open call for applications and an interview.
- Be responsible for the education plan and co-ordination of all postgraduate training activities of the Department.
- Follow and participate in the assessment of trainees provide guidance on research projects.
- Provide up to date protocols of clinical managements Be designated in agreement with the Head of Department following an open call for applications and an interview.
Be responsible for the education plan and co-ordination of all postgraduate training activities of the Department.

Follow and participate in the assessment of trainees provide guidance on research projects.

Provide up to date protocols of clinical management for the trainee at the start of the training attachment.

Provide guidance on research projects.

Publish annual statistics and the results of internal audit and make these available for trainees.

Arrange regular staff meeting and multidisciplinary discussions in which trainees can participate actively.

b) A Tutor – who will:

Be responsible for the individual trainee.

Supervise the trainee, co-ordinate his/her activities and progress, detect difficulties and promote corrections.

Ensure that trainee is regularly assessed.

**SUMMARY**

1. Trainees will have an adequately remunerated hospital post and participate in all activities of the training department.

2. The number of training posts will reflect the country’s need for specialists as well as the country’s capacity to train.

3. The minimum duration of postgraduate training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology is five years, at least four of which must be spent in a Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology. It is recommended that part of the training (6 months or one year) should take place in another European country.

4. The Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training will be granted at the end of the 5 years of training after the trainee has completed the required criteria.

5. The training syllabus will be regularly updated in accordance to recommendations by EBCOG (Training and Assessment Working Party).