



NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR
MEDICOLEGAL AFFAIRS



Practising medicine in Finland

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Practising medicine in Finland?

The practice of medicine in Finland is subject to a permit to practice the profession of physician or a licence to practice medicine issued by the National Authority of Medicolegal Affairs. Physicians granted such permit or licence are registered in the Central Register of Health Care Professionals (TERHIKKI) maintained by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs.

The procedure to obtain a permit or licence to practice in Finland depends on whether the applicant is a citizen of an EU or EEA member state and whether the applicant's qualification was taken in or outside the EU/EEA.

Persons wishing to obtain a permit or licence to practice in Finland shall fill in the application form (www.teo.fi) and submit it to the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs. The application, which may be in Finnish, Swedish or English, shall be dated and signed by the applicant. The documents prescribed below shall be appended to the application.

A person practicing medicine in Finland without a licence may be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment.

Right of persons with qualification taken in an EU/EEA member state to practice the profession of physician in Finland

Application

The following must be appended to the dated and signed application in Finnish, Swedish or English:

- Copy of passport or corresponding document
- Degree certificate or diploma inclusive of appendices (list of courses, grades etc.)
- certificate of a valid right to practice in the home country within the EU
- certificate of compliance of training with EU Directive

The appendices must be officially certified copies of the original documents (certification e.g. by notary public or the police). Translations of the documents into Finnish, Swedish or English by an authorised translator must also be enclosed with the application. The certificates of the valid right to practice and of the compliance of training with EU Directive must be original and not older than three (3) months.

The application documents will remain with the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs.

No copies of application documents are made at the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs.

The decision is subject to a charge

The decision by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs concerning the right to practice is issued in Finnish or Swedish. The decision is subject to a charge.

The decision is sent COD to Finland and the Nordic countries. Applicants in other countries are sent an invoice with the number of the bank account into which the payment shall be remitted. If the invoice is paid in a currency other than the euro, the applicant is also liable for currency exchange, transfer and other costs. The applicant shall report the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs of the payment, after which the decision on the right to practice will be sent to the applicant.

Rights according to training

The provisions of Directive 2005/36/EC apply to the licensing of doctors and medical specialists.

- (1) After the completion of the basic qualification, the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may grant the right to act as a licensed physician under the direction and supervision of another physician licensed to independently practice medicine.
- (2) The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may grant a licensed physician the right to practice the profession of a general practitioner in Finland independently after the physician has completed additional training in primary health care or corresponding training in Finland or another EU/EEA member state and has been issued a document in proof of the said qualification.
- (3) In addition, the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may grant the right to independent practice as a licensed medical specialist to applicants with training as provided in the said Directive.

A medical specialist and general practitioner must attach to the application a degree certificate or other document stating the applicant's qualifications as well as a statement by an official of the applicant's home country/country of training on the compliance of the training with the said Directive.

Sickness insurance number

Physicians must have a sickness insurance number which may be obtained from The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA) after licensing by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs. The sickness insurance number must be written or stamped e.g. on prescriptions. The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs informs the Social Insurance Institution of licensing, after which the sickness insurance number can be ordered from the Health and Income Security Department of the Social Insurance Institution, either by phone (+358 20 634 11) or by mail (P.O. Box 78, 00381 Helsinki). The first stamp is free of charge.

Aptitude test and adaptation period

If the applicant's training does not meet the requirements imposed in Directive 2005/36/EC, the applicant may demonstrate his or her professional qualifications

by completing an aptitude test or adaptation period. In respect of professions within the system of automatic recognition (doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and pharmacists), the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs determines whether an aptitude test or adaptation period shall be completed. In respect of professions within the general system of recognition, the applicant may choose between the aptitude test and the adaptation period.

Language skills

Health care professionals must possess the language skills required for the performance of their duties. The employer (e.g. health care centre or hospital) may require that it be presented with a language certificate. The official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.

Further information about language training is available at employment offices and educational institutions.

Permit or licence to practice medicine in Finland for persons who have qualified as doctor outside the EU or EEA

Applicant holds other than EU/EEA citizenship

Upon application, the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may grant a *permit to practice the profession of physician* or a *licence to practice medicine* to a citizen of a non-EU/EEA member state who has qualified as a doctor outside the EU/EEA and who holds the qualifications for the practice of the occupation prescribed by Decree as well as adequate language skills.

In order to obtain a permit or licence, the applicant must have completed any such service and additional studies and passed any such examination to demonstrate professional skills as may be prescribed by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs, to make his/her qualifications equivalent to the training of a physician in Finland, and must have provided evidence of adequate language skills.

In derogation from earlier procedure, as of the beginning of 2008 the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs will grant applicants with non-EU/EEA citizenship who meet the above conditions a licence to practice medicine in Finland.

Applicant holds EU/EEA citizenship

Upon application, the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs grants a *licence to practice medicine* to a citizen of an EU/EEA member state who has qualified as a doctor outside the EU/EEA and who holds the qualifications for the practice of the occupation prescribed by Decree.

In order to be licensed, the applicant must have completed any such additional studies and passed any such examination as may be prescribed by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs to make his/her qualifications equivalent to the training of a physician in Finland.

The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs grants the right to practice the profession of physician, general practitioner or medical specialist as a licensed professional to citizens of EU/EEA member states who hold a right granted in another EU/EEA member state to practice the said profession on the basis of training received outside the EU/EEA member state. The granting of this right is subject to the person having served as a doctor for at least three years in the EU/EEA member state in which he/she was granted the right to practice the profession of physician, general practitioner or medical specialist.

CONDITIONS OF LICENSING

The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs has stipulated the following conditions to apply to licensing:

1. Training leading to the qualification of a physician completed abroad
2. Knowledge of the Finnish or Swedish language
3. Minimum of six months of practical training as a physician in a Finnish hospital operated by a public body (state, municipality, municipal federation)
4. Examination consisting of three parts

Training requirements

Training leading to the qualification of a physician completed abroad means completion of the basic qualification of a physician of which the applicant has to present a degree certificate or diploma with an attached list of subjects. A certified copy of the original degree certificate and its translation into Finnish, Swedish or English by an authorised translator shall be presented. An advance decision on the recognition of a degree may be requested from the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs. The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may also require a certificate of the valid right to practice in the applicant's home country or another country.

Language skills requirement

Language skills adequate for practice as a physician must be proved by a Civil Service Language Proficiency Certificate or by a National Certificate of Language Proficiency. Certificates of completed studies of Finnish or Swedish, such as language courses, are not alone accepted as sufficient proof of knowledge of the Finnish or Swedish language. Information on language certificates and language examinations is available on the National Board of Education website (www.oph.fi).

No language certificate is required of citizens of Finland and other EU/EEA member states. However, health care professionals must possess the language skills required for the performance of their duties.

Practical training

Accepted practical training may consist of service as a junior house officer completed in a Finnish hospital operated by a public body or other service including tasks that correspond with those required of Finnish medical students.

Not accepted as practical training are monitoring the activities of an institution as a guest, voluntary activity in an institution or general introduction to the Finnish world of work arranged by the immigration or employment authorities (integration). Research is accepted as practical training only when it takes place in a health care institution; the maximum period accepted is two months, however. The minimum duration of practical training is six months but the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs may also define the duration and content of practice individually.

The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs does not supply practical training positions. Each applicant must obtain a practical training position e.g. by contacting hospitals personally. Practical training is agreed between hospital and applicant. No authorisation from the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs is required for starting practical training.

Examination

The examination consists of three parts:

1. Written examination on the core areas of medicine
2. Written examination on health care administration
3. Oral examination in the context of practical consultation with a patient

The examinations shall be taken in Finnish or Swedish in the above order (see Annex).

LICENSING

Provided that a physician meets the criteria stated above, he/she may be licensed to practice medicine under the supervision and direction of a professional licensed to practice medicine independently.

Such license is only granted for work in units operated by a public body (state, municipality or municipal federation).

The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs does not supply jobs. Instead, applicants themselves must obtain work, e.g. by contacting institutions such as those mentioned above. Information on physicians' positions is also available from the Finnish Medical Association, employment offices and newspapers.

LIMITED PERMIT

In derogation from the above, the National Authority may decide to grant a limited permit while the examination is pending (see above Examination).

After a physician has sat the first examination required of physicians trained outside the EU/EEA, a limited permit to work at a hospital operated by a public body may be granted. After sitting the second examination, the limited permit may be expanded to cover working at a health care centre.

Limited permits are specific to a named speciality and place of employment and are granted for a period of no more than six months at a time. The combined duration of the limited permits granted to a physician may not exceed two years.

SICKNESS INSURANCE NUMBER

Foreign physicians practicing medicine in Finland must have a sickness insurance number which may be obtained from the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) after the physician has been licensed or granted his/her first limited permit by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs. The sickness insurance number must be given on e.g. prescriptions. The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs informs KELA of licensing or limited permit and the sickness insurance number may then be requested from Health and Income Security Department of the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) either by phone, +358 (0)20 634 11 or by letter to PO Box 78, 00381 Helsinki. The first sickness insurance number stamp is free of charge.

LICENSING AS GENERAL PRACTITIONER

The right to practice independently as a general practitioner in Finland may be granted to a physician who has completed the specific training of doctor in general medical practice (PTL) in Finland or corresponding training provided in the relevant Government Decree. The specific training of doctor in general medical practice is provided by faculties of medicine at universities.

SPECIALISING IN FINLAND

The degree of medical specialist is in Finland a specialised postgraduate degree that may be taken in the Faculties of Medicines at the Universities of Helsinki, Kuopio, Oulu, Tampere and Turku.

An absolute prerequisite for taking the degree is that the physician holds a right to practice medicine in Finland granted by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs.

Decisions on the admission of foreign physicians to postgraduate studies and on the recognition of training completed abroad as the training of a medical specialist in Finland are taken by the medical faculty concerned. Medical specialist training has a duration of 5–6 years and consists mainly of clinical service in the relevant speciality.

A foreign physician may also take the postgraduate degree in medicine of Doctor of Medical Science at the aforementioned universities. The right to practice the profession of a physician is not obligatory for scientific research.

WORK PERMIT

More information about residence permits and work permits is available from the Directorate of Immigration (www.uvi.fi) and the labour authorities (www.mol.fi).

EXAMINATIONS

Under the Decree on Health Care Professionals, a foreign physician shall pass an examination which proves that his/her qualifications are equivalent to those provided by the training of a physician in Finland. A minimum of six months of practical hospital training in Finland must be completed before sitting the examination.

The examination is organised by the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs together with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tampere.

The examination consists of three parts, which shall be completed separately:

1. Clinical knowledge

A written clinical examination to test the physician's basic knowledge of clinical medicine and health care. The written questions consist of patient case histories in key specialities and are equivalent to the level of the final examination of the Licentiate of Medicine degree in Finland.

2. Health care in Finland

An administrative examination involving issues which are central to the practice of medicine in Finland, such as social welfare and health, legislation, health care systems, forensic medicine and the supply and distribution of medicinal products.

3. Clinical skills

The purpose of this practical examination is to assure that the physician has facilities for encountering the patient and making use of his/her knowledge and skills acquired by training in primary health care as well as mastering the basic methods needed in the occupation of a general practitioner. A physician must be able to work in cooperation with specialised medical care and he/she must be familiar with the substance of health promotion.

The practical examination is arranged at the teaching health centre of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tampere.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

An application using the relevant form shall be submitted to the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs for the right to sit the first part of the examination, the clinical knowledge examination. No application is required for parts 2 and 3.

The following shall be appended to the application:

- copy of passport
- copy of degree certificate or diploma
- copy of language skills certificate
- proof of practical hospital training.

The National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs only accepts document copies that have been officially certified by a notary public or the police.

The application for the clinical knowledge examination shall be submitted to the National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs at least two weeks in advance of the examination date. Registration for the administrative examination is made directly to the medical faculty of the University of Tampere, and the date of the practical examination is agreed with the faculty.

The clinical knowledge examination (part 1) and administrative examination (part 2) are held four times annually: in February, May, September and November. Information about examination dates, fees and other practical concerns is available from the Faculty of Medicine, department of general practice, secretary Riitta-Liisa Haukilahti, tel. +358 (0)3 35516718, email: riitta-liisa.haukilahti@uta.fi.

A certificate of the examination is issued by the Faculty of Medicine once all three parts have been completed.





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