
The Long Wait To Practice Medicine

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None of the Vietnamese doctors who recently fled to the United States is practicing medicine yet in California because of the state's strict rules for licensure. For many, it may be years before they can put up their shingle.

Like any other foreign-trained physician, the refugees must meet certain requirements set by the California State Board of Medical Examiners in Sacramento.

First they have to establish their eligibility to be able to take the Federation Licensure Examination, known as FLEX, the national test that is recognized by 48 states. They have to have proof that they have completed two years of pre-medical training, including physics, chemistry, and biology or zoology, and a certificate of education from their medical school showing they have attended 4000 hours of classes and training. They must also have a medical school diploma and a license from their native

country.

The earliest these doctors will be able to take the FLEX test is next December, when it is given all over the United States, including San Francisco and Los Angeles. It will be given again in June.

To be able to practice in California, the refugees must have completed a one-year internship at a hospital in the state, or two years of clinical service outside the state, or be certified by the American Specialty Board.

After they have completed these requirements, they have to take a special oral and clinical examination given by the state for foreign medical graduates.

According to Cherry Fenn, the supervisor of applications for the California State Board of Medical Examiners, there have been "lots of inquiries" about Vietnamese doctors from communities that need doctors. As of yesterday, the board had sent out about a dozen applications.
