



# Kirkuk Journal of Medical Sciences

## EDITORIAL

### Shaping The Future of Medical Education in Iraq after The WFME Recognition: Responsibilities and Looking Ahead

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Received: 23 February 2024

Accepted: 28 March 2024

First published online: 01 April 2024



DOI: [10.32894/kjms.2024.147699.1101](https://doi.org/10.32894/kjms.2024.147699.1101).

The recent recognition of the National Council for Accreditation of Medical Colleges (NCAMC) in Iraq by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) marks a significant milestone in the journey towards enhancing the quality of medical education in Iraq [1, 2].

However, this recognition brings with it a set of actions and responsibilities. Both, the NCAMC and colleges of medicine in Iraq, must embrace continuous quality improvement (Plan, Do, Study/Check, Act (PDSA/PDCA) cycles) [3], and innovations in medical education to ensure sustainable development (Figure 1).

To the Iraqi medical colleges (IMC), the recognition by WFME is not a final goal but the commencement of a rigorous and continuous process of quality improvement. It is imperative for IMC to recognize that accreditation is not a tick box exercise but rather the initiation of a comprehensive organization-wide journey towards excellence [4]. IMC should embrace a culture of total quality management, where continuous assessment, feedback, and improvement become integral to their operations [5, 6]. Beyond meeting basic accreditation standards, IMC must strive for innovation, pushing the boundaries of medical education to foster the development of future healthcare leaders who can navigate the complexities



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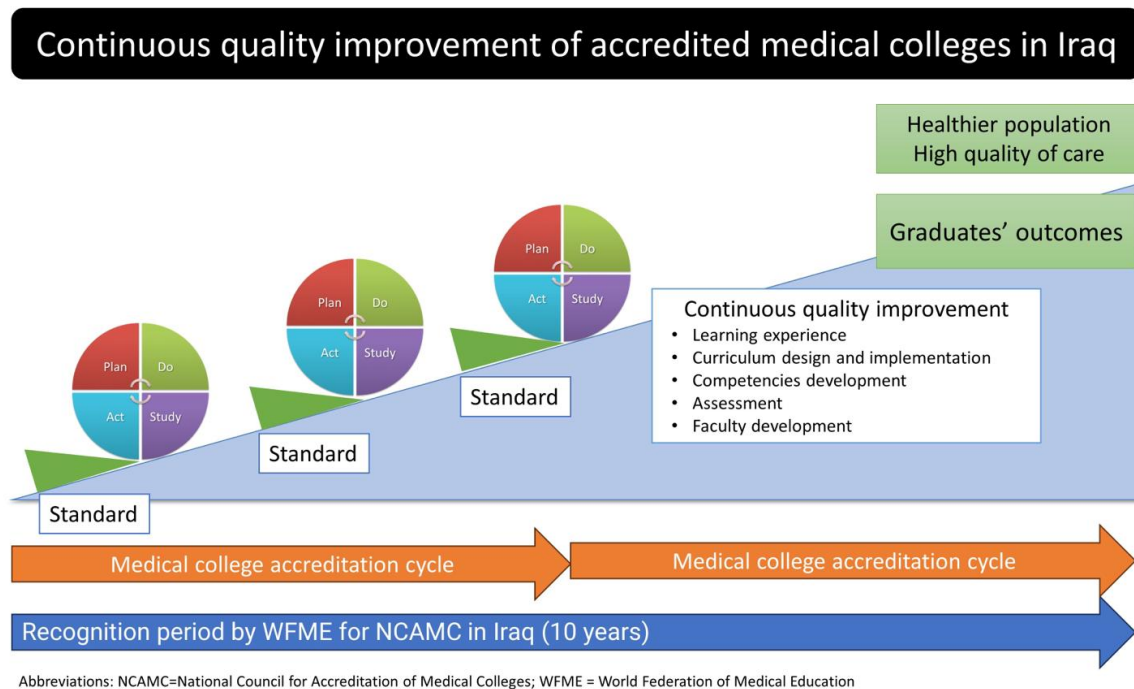


Figure 1. A framework for the Continuous quality improvement of accredited medical colleges in Iraq using the PDSA improvement cycles.

of a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

For the NCAMC, the recognition by WFME places a spotlight on its critical role in ensuring the quality and relevance of medical education in Iraq. NCAMC must leverage this recognition to drive meaningful change and improvement across the medical education landscape. This includes creating an online regularly updated database to display comparative self-evaluation data to inform policy decisions. Follow-up site visits are essential to ensure that improvement measures proposed by colleges are effectively implemented and sustained, thus reinforcing a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Additionally, the NCAMC must prioritize the enhancement and development of its tools and methodologies to streamline the accreditation process and promote consistency and fairness [7]. Addressing challenges and weaknesses faced by the NCAMC itself is also paramount. This includes issues like funding, fundraising, recruitment and sustainable development of assessors. It is essential to strengthen the NCAMC foundations upon which the quality assurance of medical education rests.

Furthermore, strategic planning must be undertaken to maximize the impact of accreditation on health outcomes and medical education. NCAMC, in collaboration with IMC and other stakeholders, should develop robust strategies aimed at improving the overall effectiveness and relevance of medical education in addressing the healthcare needs of the population of Iraq. This involves identifying areas for growth

and innovation, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and aligning medical education curricula and graduates' outcomes with emerging healthcare trends and challenges. For example, incorporating inquiry-driven programs, active learning strategies, objective student assessment, continuous periodic program evaluation, and continuous professional development of academic staff in IMC.

In conclusion, the recognition of the NCAMC by WFME signals a new era of accountability, innovation, and excellence in medical education. Both IMC and NCAMC must seize this opportunity to embark on a journey of continuous improvement, guided by a commitment to quality, relevance, and the advancement of healthcare outcomes in Iraq. By embracing their respective responsibilities and working collaboratively toward shared goals, they can pave the way for a brighter future for medical education and healthcare in the country.

## ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

### • Acknowledgements

None.

### • Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Not required for editorial article.

- **Consent for Publication**

Not applicable.

- **Availability of Data and Material**

No individual personal data included.

- **Competing Interests**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

- **Funding**

Self funded.

- **Authors' Contributions**

The authors conducted the literature review and composed the manuscript. The corresponding author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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