

Burundi-In the Heart of Africa: techniques paramédicales

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Colombe Bizumuremyi, a Burundian Clinical Officer (B.Sc, M.Sc) is currently working as Assistant Professor at the University of Mwaro, one of the two universities of the country which train clinical officers.



Jean Claude NGENDAKUMANA is also a Burundian Clinical Officer (B.Sc,). She graduated in December 2005 from the University of Mwaro, worked at Kimumbu District Hospital 2006-2009, and as Supervisor at the Kibumbu Health District Office from 2009-2013. Since 2013, Jean Claude has worked as Coordinator of the Technical team of the Provincial Committee for Verification and validation of the services of Health Centers and Hospitals in Mwaro Province -Ministry of Public Health and the fight against AIDS-Republic of Burundi.



General Information:

The program name for Clinical Officer training is referred to as "sciences et techniques paramédicales" in Burundi. Unfortunately, the Clinical Officers Profession has not been integrated in the Burundian Health Care System.

The techniques paramédicales program started in Burundi in 2001. The program started as a 4- year Bachelor's degree program, but in 2014 the Burundian education system requirements for a Bachelor's degree changed from 4 to 3 years. The techniques paramédicales program also transitioned to a 3-year program.

Entry Criteria:

After completing secondary school every student is given a certificate and then a national examination and if they pass this examination, they are awarded a national certificate (diplôme d'état) which is required for admission to any university in Burundi.

There are no clinical requirements for students to enter a techniques paramédicales program. Students must pass a national exam which is taken after secondary (high) school. Passing the national exam earns students the right to begin a program at any university. International students must have the equivalent of their degree from a secondary school (high school) and must also pass the national exam.

Education:

There are currently two techniques paramédicales programs in Burundi: The University of Mwaro and The Institute of Community Health. Together, the programs have approximately 200 students enrolled. The total number of students accepted at each of the two programs depends on how many students apply. The training lasts for 36 months and includes ten months of internship (patient encounter practicums) broken up over the three years.

The students earn a Bachelor's degree.

Financing Education:

There are no government programs available for financing the cost of the programs. Students are responsible for paying all fees.

Accrediting/Regulatory Bodies:

The programs are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, specifically the National Commission of Higher Education.

There is currently no regulatory body for techniques paramédicales.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the one which is implicated by supporting the institutions which have PAs program in accrediting the programs, monitoring and evaluating. And if anyone is recruited by the MOH, the salary is funded by the MOL.

Professional Licensure:

Currently, Burundi lacks a regulatory body to authorize the license to practice as a techniques paramédicales. Graduates of techniques paramédicales programs can take a certifying exam after the final 6 months of internship (third year). The exam which includes a written and clinical portion as well as a written clinical report. Those who pass the exam may begin practicing medicine in Burundi. However, if the graduate moves to another country, the lack of a license may pose problems.

There is no licensing database in the country.

Scope of Practice:

Techniques paramédicales can coordinate and supervise community health teams and lead diagnostic procedures and support physicians in treatments and interventions. They can organize medical care in workplaces, promote preventative and curative care in communities, establish diagnoses, practice procedures, and evaluate the effects of treatments. Techniques paramédicales can also admit patients to hospitals. Prescribing medications is allowed, but the scope depends on the clinical setting.

Techniques paramédicales cannot prescribe psychotropic medications. For hospitalized patients, a techniques paramédicales may prescribe medications under a doctor's order.

Maintaining Role:

There are currently no requirements for continuing medical education/Continuing Professional Development (CPD), but this is part of future planning for Burundi. There is also not yet a regulatory body for techniques paramédicales in Burundi, but this is also in the planning stages.

Job Opportunities:

Currently there are 2,000 practicing. There is an issue due to lack of jobs related to scope of practice and the name of the program; now students are losing interest in this program. Employment opportunities or number of jobs available, it is an issue because the laureates, are not recruited these days, not because of no job opportunities, but because of the name of the program and of confusion of the scope of practice with nurses and doctors, the MOH is confusing them with nurses.

References:

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