

Editorial

Presidential address: launching the Korea Health Personnel Licensing Examination Institute, a government-supported special foundation from December 23, 2015

Chang Hwi Kim*

Korea Health Personnel Licensing Examination Institute, Seoul, Korea



On December 23, 2015, the Korea Health Personnel Licensing Examination Institute (KHPLEI) was launched as a special foundation supported by the Korean Government on the basis of the enactment of a new law. It functions as the continuation of the National Health Personnel Licensing Examination Board (NHPLEB) of Korea, which was

established in 1998 and persisted for 17 years. The NHPLEB of Korea was itself a continuation of the National Medical Licensing Examination Board of Korea launched in 1992. Therefore, 23 years have passed since the establishment of the National Licensing Examination Board for physicians, the first iteration of the organization in Korea. The significance of being a special foundation is that, under Korean law, it is possible for the management and development of the organization to be financially underwritten by the Korean government. For this development, we can thank Dr. Jeong Lim Moon, who was a member of 19th National Assembly of the Republic of Korea from May 30, 2012 to May 29, 2016. She was a member of the ruling party: the Saenuri Party. She had worked in the

Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the Catholic University of Korea and volunteered at the Korean Medical Association with the title of spokesperson and executive member. She led a group of 23 National Assembly members in sponsoring the law on the Korea Health Personnel Licensing Examination Institute on January 13, 2013. It passed the National Assembly in May of 2015. This law was officially made public on June 22, 2015, and is available at <http://www.law.go.kr/>. Thereafter, the new foundation, the KHPLEI, was launched officially on December 23, 2015.

As the first president of this new foundation, I have a great responsibility for the development and promotion of the organization and to improve national licensing examination services for a variety of health professions. I have taught medical students from 1981 to 2013 at Soonchunhyang University, Korea. I would like to make the most of my experience as a medical educator through my new role as the president of the KHPLEI. I propose the following goals during my three-year term:

First, clinical skills tests shall be expanded to a variety of health professionals besides physicians and emergency medical technicians [1]. A clinical skills test is not easy to implement in the context of a national licensing examination due to its cost and the preparation needed on the part of examinees; however, to better evaluate the clinical skill of examinees, it should be the top-ranking goal of the KHPLEI.

Second, smart device-based testing (SBT) shall be implemented in 2017 in the licensing examination for emergency medical technicians [2]. SBT is a type of computer-based testing in which the user's interface device is a smart device such as a smart tablet or smart phone. It is administered offline, not over the internet. Wifi cannot yet be implemented for high-

*Corresponding email: pedsoon@kuksiwon.or.kr

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stakes examinations due to potential security problems. In the future, online testing may be possible after security issues have been addressed. The medical licensing examination will be the next target for SBT, with implementation in 2020. The KHPLEI has a plan to adopt SBT for at least 10 health professions by 2030. This will require securing an appropriate budget and meticulous preparation for a smooth migration from paper-and-pencil tests to SBT. If the leaders of any specific profession wish to implement SBT, their national licensing examination shall be given priority consideration. Otherwise, the priority professions shall be those for which the number of examinees is relatively small.

Third, setting an appropriate passing score on each licensing examination is an urgent task. Introducing a psychometric approach to setting the passing score, such as the modified Angoff method or borderline method, and controlling the difficulty index of each item is needed [3]. If the KHPLEI adopts a rigorous technique for setting the passing threshold, the fluctuation of the passing rate from one administration of a licensing examination to the next can be alleviated. For this task, the KHPLEI will need the expertise of psychometricians as collaborators or professional consultants.

Achieving the above three goals is mandatory for the improvement of the quality of licensed health personnel in Korea. Their greater quality and performance will, in turn, serve to promote the health of the people of Korea.

In addition to augmenting the licensing examinations, the KHPLEI should take on a broader role in strengthening its position as a leader in health professions licensing. Thus, my fourth proposal is to prepare a support system to help other countries in Asia improve their licensing examination systems for health professions. The KHPLEI has extensive knowledge of the world landscape with regard to licensing examination systems, as well as our own experience to draw upon; therefore, we can offer the expertise of our staff for programs and initiatives related to the national licensing examinations of other countries. This shall be another task of the KHPLEI in the near future.

Fifth, the KHPLEI has supported research projects for the development and revision of each licensing examination every year. Some of them have been published as articles through the *Journal of Educational Evaluation for Health Professions* (JEEHP). I will stress the publication of research reports in the journal so that the many stakeholders in health professions licensing understand the Korean system and can draw upon the information reported in published articles. We will look to researchers supported by the KHPLEI to submit reports on their findings to JEEHP.

Sixth, the competency of the KHPLEI in research and development shall be improved by training the current staff or

recruiting full-time researchers. Like the National Board of Medical Examiners in the United States of America and the Medical Council of Canada, the KHPLEI shall be a leading institute on national licensing examinations for the health professions. The results of our research will be communicated to the world through JEEHP.

Finally, a building that will house an item development center for the national licensing examinations of a variety of health professions will be constructed. A ground-breaking ceremony took place on March 7, 2016 at the construction site in Chungju, Chungcheongbuk-do. We aim to open the doors in March of 2017. The budget for the building is 13.8 million US dollars. Its gross floor area of 5,057 m² will be allocated to workspace for the professionals who contribute items for licensing examinations. Accommodations, work rooms, and administrative offices will be included. This center will provide a more comfortable and efficient environment for item contribution. I have taken on the responsibility of overseeing the process of construction and raising sufficient funds from the Korean government for the building.

To achieve the above goals successfully, more intensive information exchange through JEEHP is also necessary. Fortunately, the number of article submissions not only from Korea but also from around the world has increased rapidly. Among them, it is worth noting that the findings of many studies performing evaluations of nationwide tests have been published. Launched in 2004, JEEHP published volume 13 in 2016. Its inclusion in PubMed Central and PubMed in February 2009, Web of Science in December 2015, and MEDLINE in March 2016 were milestones in its becoming a truly international journal. In my role, I will continuously support the publication of JEEHP as an open access journal for widespread, convenient access to JEEHP from all over the world.

It is my privilege and honor to work as the first president of the KHPLEI. I will always listen to the voices of all the various licensing stakeholders and will continue to propose initiatives to promote the quality of national licensing examinations for the health professions. I wish all readers of and contributors to JEEHP the very best and look forward to a close collaboration between the journal and the foundation.

ORCID: Chang Hwi Kim: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5293-4428>

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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