

Twenty-four Viet M.D.'s may practice soon

By Kim Shepherd

Twenty-four Vietnamese refugee doctors are nearly ready to practice medicine in Nebraska, said Dr. Jack Watkins, administrator of the educational program for Vietnamese doctors at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Four of the doctors passed the Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduate (ECFMG) examination, he said, and the remaining doctors are waiting for results of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examination.

Every doctor participating in the program took the ECFMG but only four passed both the medical and English portions of the examination, Watkins said. The 20 doctors who failed the English portion took the TOEFL as an alternative to their ECFMG scores, he said.

TOEFL test results will be available in about two weeks, Watkins said. Doctors passing the TOEFL will take the Federal License Examination (FLEX) with the other four doctors in June.

FLEX required

"FLEX is the exam that physicians must pass in order to practice medicine," Watkins said.

A total of 33 Vietnamese doctors were brought to

Nebraska after the fall of the South Vietnamese government on April 30, 1975. The doctors' education program is jointly sponsored by the medical center and Creighton University in Omaha.

Twenty-nine of the doctors are sponsored by Nebraska communities, three are privately sponsored and one is married to a Nebraska citizen.

The medical center has provided the doctors with medical instruction, Watkins said. Doctors reported to the medical center daily, he said, spending their mornings in medical classes, their afternoons in English classes and attending seminars in the late afternoon.

The doctors have not had clinical training yet, but Watkins said it soon would begin.

English instruction has been coordinated by Creighton's English Dept. Lloyd Hubenka, chairman of Creighton's English and Speech Dept. said it used the most complete programs available, the Defense Language Instruction Program.

Eight weeks

The program included eight weeks of instruction last summer at Creighton, Hubenka said. The program used \$50,000 appropriated by the Nebraska Legislature, he

said, and approached the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) for assistance. OPS provided two teachers for the doctors' instruction.

The major problem in teaching English to the doctors resulted from the Vietnamese language's lack of verb tenses, Hubenka said. No means to distinguish between present, past and future exist in the Vietnamese language.

The Vietnamese language uses verbs to indicate time and to distinguish between singular and plural, which made it difficult for the doctors to understand English, Hubenka said.

The medical center and Creighton University should be proud of the progress made with the doctors, said Dr. Margaret Faith, assistant dean for Continuing Medical Education at the medical center and project director of the Vietnamese Education Program.

Faith said that nationwide, excluding Nebraska, 35 Vietnamese doctors took the ECFMG exam. Sixteen passed the medical section and one passed the English portion. In Canada, she said, 42 doctors took the test with 21 passing the medical section and none passing the English portion.



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