

Dilemma of Migrant Healthcare Workers



According to an intercontinental study by the Centre for Public Health, Department of General Medicine of MedUni Vienna, despite a shortage of qualified healthcare professionals, there are huge obstacles put in the way of qualified medical staff with a migrant background when they wish to work abroad. The study is published in *PLoS ONE*.

The study examined the situation of qualified female healthcare workers from Africa working in Austria, Belgium, UK, Botswana and South Africa. The findings show that despite their high standard of qualifications, mostly all of those questioned in the study had to wait an average of two to ten years before they were allowed to practice their professional in the destination country.

The basis of the study is the EU-funded intercontinental project HURAPRIM (Human Resources for Primary Health Care in Africa in which 88 qualitative interviews were conducted with immigrants from different healthcare professions in the five countries. The study analysed in-depth interviews with female doctors and nurses originating from 16 African countries.

Despite the fact that all these five countries face a shortage of qualified healthcare workers, migrant healthcare professionals found it difficult to have their qualifications recognised. There appear to be two sides to this problem. On one side, the country of origin, where these migrant workers come from, are losing qualified and important professionals. On the other side, these qualified migrant workers are not being recognised in the destination country and are not being used to their full capacity. It is thus evident that rapid integration is required into the labour market.

Silvia Wojczewski, scientific project worker in the Department of General Medicine of the Centre for Public Health at MedUni Vienna and the lead author of this study emphasises on the need to integrate highly qualified migrants more quickly into the labour market of their destination countries and to avoid bureaucratic or racial discrimination. She believes this could be done by speeding up the bureaucratic process and by simplifying the recognition of the non-European qualifications of migrants.

A negative consequence of such discrimination is the loss of skill because healthcare migrant workers who could not find a job in their field were forced to change their profession. In addition, majority of the participants included in his study reported that they faced racial discrimination in their destination country both professionally and in their day to day life.

Source: Medical University of Vienna

Image Credit: Medical University of Vienna

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