

State of International Medical Graduates Applying for Training in the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

International Medical Graduates (IMGs), after obtaining their basic or higher medical qualification, relocate to the United Kingdom (UK) for further experience in the standard system and obtain a postgraduate qualification. As misunderstanding and misconception is expected, not all find themselves lucky to obtain career progression. Despite UK National bodies trying to help IMGs transition, there lies an inability to achieve the required specification despite exhausting and tireless effort for the training selection process. Failing this may cause a psychological impact on the IMGs, resulting in untoward decisions like changing the desired specialty, seeking an alternative route to achieve a postgraduate qualification or opting out of a medical career. Targeted and career-oriented mentorship plays an essential role in professional career progression. IMGs in the training programs, preferably with the help of national working and training bodies, need to come forward to help struggling fellows fill the gap while eliminating the misconceptions.

KEYWORDS: International graduate; Medical training; United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in the United Kingdom (UK) are the doctors who got their primary medical education from non-European Economic Area (EEA) recognised medical institute. They comprise of more than one thirds of medical workforce in the UK hospitals. Because of heterogeneity in cultural background, reactions to separation from family and friends, and being from different system of medical education, they are expected to face challenges especially when applying for training number. There are very few studies that focus on these challenges faced by IMGs in the UK, warranting the need for research into this field.

DISCUSSION

A lot has been talked about the IMGs facing cultural and practising barriers when they start their medical career in the UK. In contrast, less has been talked about the hurdles and challenges faced by them while applying for national training numbers in different medical specialities. Most of the IMGs, like the rest of the world,

move to the UK with the hope of obtaining the training number and achieve a highly standard postgraduate medical qualification. Not all fall into this expedient path to achieve their dreams and further practice safely in their specialty. There is a misconception among IMGs that obtaining a national training number is time-consuming and difficult. We think that problem lies with the miscalculation of the understanding of the UK system despite laboured, physical and exhausting preparation for the training interviews [1].

Most of the IMGs who move to the UK with career aim have background postgraduate experience in their country of origin. Despite having tremendous experience in relevant specialty, they may lack to achieve the essential requirements specified by the UK Health Education system. Inability to achieve the required specification despite vast experience may directly risk their selection into the desired specialty training. Failing to enter the national training system can have a direct psychological impact on the IMGs. This may have been compounded by the burnouts

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phenomenon faced during preparations to enter the training system in a short period of time. These effects may lead to changing the desired specialty, seeking an alternative route to achieve a postgraduate qualification or opting out of a medical career. When reflecting, these IMGs may further create the critical cycle of misperception and discouragements, leading to loss of hope for others to attain career progression. Such perception may constrain other IMGs to contain their career aims. Here, targeted and career-oriented mentorship plays an essential role in professional career progression [2].

Although the UK National bodies and forums try to help IMGs transition to different medical systems, there is some deficiency of evidence-based guidance to address the barrier they face in achieving this milestone. In the recent past, different platforms and forums have come forward on social media to help IMGs influence their career progression in the UK. However, no documented research is available to address the issues they face in obtaining postgraduate medical qualification after entering through the training system.

IMGs already in the training program, preferably with the help of national working and training bodies, should come forward to

help others and fill the gap while eliminating the misconceptions. At the same time, a balance in obtaining a training number or alternative support may address the issues; but needs to be piloted. If the issues are not appropriately addressed and evidence-based guidance is not produced, the global shortage of doctors may multiply while hindering IMGs from coming to the UK to work [3].

CONCLUSION

International Medical Graduates (IMGs) need support and guidance during the transition from one medical system to another and during career progression. There is a need for specific research on them to understand and address the challenges and difficulties they face while achieving training number.

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