

Causes, Consequences and Responses to Health Worker Migration from South Africa, India, Jamaica and the Philippines:

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Background: An adequate health workforce is essential to an effective health care system, but many countries are subject to high levels of health worker migration. The aim of this study is to better understand the drivers of health worker migration, its consequences, and the various strategies being employed to mitigate its negative impacts. The session will present the study's methods and preliminary findings, as well as some common themes emerging across countries.

Objectives: The following questions will be explored: • What is the present picture of and recent historic trends in the migration of highly skilled health personnel in each of the countries? • What, according to those 'on the ground' are the most critical consequences of the migration of health workers that should be examined and how could these consequences be 'measured' for comparative policy analyses? • What is the range of program and policy responses that have been considered, proposed and implemented to address these causes and consequences of health worker migration from low- to high-income countries, and what have been some of the outcomes to these responses?

Methods: The study was conducted in four countries – Jamaica, India, the Philippines, and South Africa – which have historically been 'sources' of health workers migrating to other countries. Data were collected through surveys of diverse categories of health workers including physicians, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dentists and dental auxiliaries, as well as key informant interviews, in each country. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and with regression models. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. A workshop which brought together co-investigators from each of the participating countries was held to share preliminary results so as to begin to identify common themes emerging across countries. **Findings:** Migration of health workers from each of these countries continues to be prevalent. The causes of this migration are numerous, long-standing, and systemic, and are largely based around differences in living and working conditions between these 'source' and 'destination' countries. There is minimal systematic tracking of health worker migration in these countries, making scientific analysis of its consequences difficult. Although there have been national and international efforts to manage and mitigate the negative impacts of migration on 'source' countries, there is little evidence of the implementation or effectiveness of such efforts.

Conclusion: More effective management of health worker migration requires investment in information systems to monitor and study it. Better management of health worker migration will require stronger collaboration between source and destination countries.

Take Home Messages: A better understanding of the drivers of migration, the consequences to local systems and health workers, and the various strategies that have been employed in a number of countries will help policy and decision-makers to mitigate negative impacts on their countries.