

BEYOND REGISTRATION: the ongoing language support needs of foreign-trained healthcare professionals

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BACKGROUND

OET assesses the English language skills of healthcare professionals seeking to register and practise in an English-speaking environment. It provides a valid and reliable assessment of all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking - using real healthcare scenarios. Accepted as proof of English proficiency for registration by healthcare boards and councils in the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Dubai, OET is also accepted by Australian and New Zealand immigration for visa purposes.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the study was to survey OET alumni on their English test experience and assess the need for advice on how to improve English language and communication skills after registration with a healthcare regulatory board.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Professor Peter Martin, Chair Clinical Communication, Deakin University says: "All practicing healthcare professionals need mentorship and training in communication skills."

Should healthcare employers provide ongoing communication training with modules tailored for internationally-trained staff?

METHODOLOGY

An online survey with 14 questions was distributed to 55,000 OET alumni via email in February 2018. There were 2,083 responses in a 28-day period.

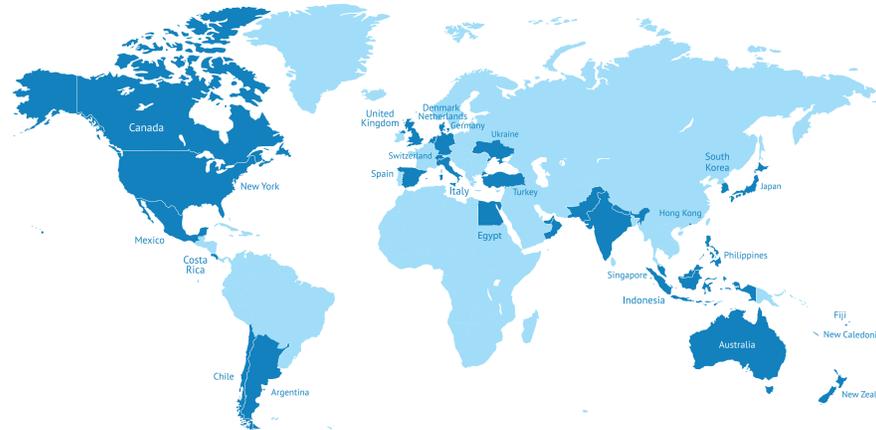
RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Is a healthcare-specific English test useful for preparing candidates for the workplace?
2. How likely are OET alumni to access ongoing advice on English language communication skills?
3. How would OET alumni prefer to receive advice and support?

Preparation for OET is useful... However, in the real settings we need more effort to achieve this (good communication). So continued support from OET will be beneficial.

Doctor from Japan currently working in Brisbane, Australia who is likely to access ongoing advice.

SETTING



2083 survey participants from around the world, including:

1684 nurses

227 doctors

172 other professions (e.g. physiotherapists, pharmacists and dentists)

RESULTS

FINDING 1: OET HELPED DEVELOP LANGUAGE SKILLS NEEDED IN MY WORKPLACE

61% of doctors currently working in English speaking countries agree or strongly agree

71% of nurses currently working in English speaking countries agree or strongly agree

Here in Saudi Arabia there are multiple nationalities most of them talking English so OET helped me to improve my communication with patients.

Doctor from Egypt currently working in Saudi Arabia, who is likely to access ongoing advice.

FINDING 2: HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO ACCESS ONGOING ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM OET?

81% of all respondents are likely or very likely to access ongoing advice and support from OET.

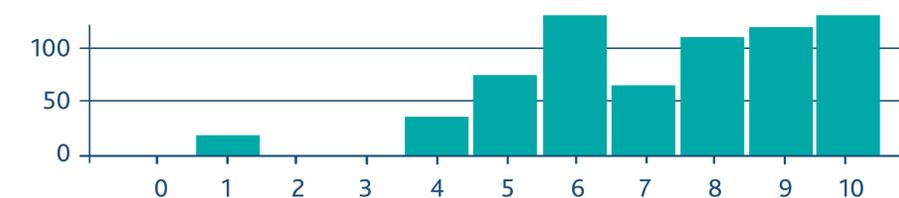
What about the **19%** who do not want to access ongoing advice? Qualitative results show that foreign nurses who have trained in an English-speaking country are less likely to access ongoing advice.

After studying nursing in Australia (in English) I was shocked that I could not register and practice unless an academic IELTS or OET test was taken.

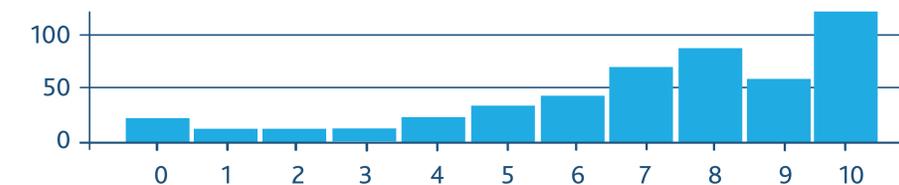
Nurse currently working in Perth, Australia who is unlikely to access ongoing advice.

FINDING 3: HOW RELEVANT WERE OET TEST TASKS TO LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED IN THE WORKPLACE?

Doctors on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being extremely relevant



Nurses on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being extremely relevant



FINDING 4: HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS ADVICE?

31%
EMAIL BULLETIN

32%
ONLINE TRAINING
MODULES

18%
FACE-TO-FACE
WORKSHOPS

16%
ONLINE
FORUM

I'm trained in American English. Where I work, Kiwis speak a different English and sometimes their accent needs quite getting used to.

Nurse from the Philippines currently working in Auckland, New Zealand who is likely to access ongoing advice.