Ethical Integration of Internationally Educated Health Professionals: Ethical and Regulatory Contexts

Report from the United States

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Overview of Presentation

Pathways for entry for internationally educated physicians, nurses and pharmacists
- Challenges associated with entry

Summary data on numbers attempting qualification and practicing

Recent trends

Description of programs designed to assist with ethical integration of health care professionals
Physicians Pathway for Entry

Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECMFG) certification

- Required for all international medical graduates (IMGs) prior to seeking graduate medical education (GME) positions and subsequent licensure
- Medical school listed in the International Medical Education Directory (IMED)
- Primary source verification of medical diploma
- Passing United States Medical Licensing Examinations (USMLE) step 1, step 2 clinical knowledge (CK), and step 2 clinical skills (CS)
  - Same exam requirements as domestic graduates
Physicians Challenges Associated with Entry

No special pathways to circumvent or fast-track the ECFMG certification or GME requirement
Certification process is costly
USMLE exams are challenging
- Require advanced English skills
- Must travel to the US to take step 2 CS
ECFMG certification does not guarantee a GME position
- Approximately half of ECFMG certified physicians do not enter GME in the United States
After GME, additional licensure requirements
Summary Data of ECFMG Certified Physicians

Numbers of IMGs certified by ECFMG for the years 2006 – 2010, stratified by USIMGs versus non-USIMGs

- 2006: USIMGs, n=10,818
- 2007: USIMGs, n=10,172
- 2008: USIMGs, n=10,274
- 2009: USIMGs, n=10,407
- 2010: USIMGs, n=9,399
In 2010, 23.5% (of about 700,000) practicing physicians in direct patient care are IMGs.

Citizenship (at medical school) percentages of IMGs:

- India: 32.8%
- United States: 19.7%
- Philippines: 22.7%
- Pakistan: 1.9%
- China: 1.9%
- Iran: 1.4%
- Egypt: 2.1%
- USSR*: 2.6%
- South Korea: 5.3%
- Syria: 7.6%
- Other: 2.3%
Internationally educated nurses (IENs) must be certified by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)

- Credential verification
- Qualifying exam
- English exam

In 2008-2009, CGFNS issued 3,300 certificates

Pass National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN)

Data on practicing IENs: 3.5% (2007)

- Underestimate
Internationally educated pharmacists must be certified by the Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee (FPGEC)

- Credential verification
- Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Equivalency Examination (FPGEE)
- English exam

Additional licensure exams and requirements vary by state

In 2008, 3,045 applicants took the FPGEE
Ethical Integration of Internationally Educated Health Professionals

ECFMG Acculturation Program

- Resources for individual IMGs and GME programs
- IMG Advisors Network
- Interactive modules on US healthcare system, survival guides, etc.
- All ECFMG acculturation resources are free and available on the ECFMG website

Numerous other acculturation programs in use for nurses and other health care professionals
Research needed on effectiveness of programs
Discussion / Conclusions

US will continue to rely on internationally educated health care professionals

Internationally educated health care professionals will continue to be attracted to the US

Increase in US domestic production and changing roles (i.e., nurse practitioners, physician assistants) will decrease need for internationally educated physicians

Need for better metrics on migration
- Production of health care workers
- Domestic needs
- Is production focused on local needs?