

**Crisis in Human Resources for Health
Commonwealth Civil Society responses
For consideration at the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting
Geneva 2006**

Contributing Organisations

*Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA)
Commonwealth Nurses Federation (CNF)
Commonwealth Dental Association (CDA)
Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association (CPA)
British Medical Association (BMA)
Royal College of Nursing (RCN)*

Six Commonwealth Associated Health organisations met prior to your meeting in Geneva to identify some key solutions to the Global shortage of health workers and make a positive contribution to the CHMM. We acknowledge with gratitude that several members of the Commonwealth, are already making very significant net financial contributions in efforts to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly in those relating to the elimination of poverty and the control of HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria in developing countries, but the crisis continues.

The facts are that:

African countries need the equivalent of at least 1 million additional health care workers, in order to offer basic services consistent with the Millennium Development Goals. At present there are just 600,000 doctors, nurses and midwives for 600 million people⁽¹⁾.

There are dire predictions of massive shortages of 200,000 physicians and 800,000 nurses by 2020 in the US - driven by the escalating demands of an aging society⁽²⁾. This will definitely accelerate the current migration from developing to developed countries.

This Skills Drain of health care workers from developing to developed countries may considerably hinder the laudable international efforts to eradicate poverty and improve health.

Suggested Recommendations

Commonwealth Health Ministers are urged to promote the following recommended strategies at the forthcoming World Health Assembly and to take action to implement them as appropriate on return to their own countries – ***please see page two for list of proposed strategies.***

Proposed Strategies

Developed Countries should:

- ◆ Endeavour to urgently implement adequate workforce planning to achieve self sufficiency including putting in place the necessary infrastructure to train and retain health care workers; In this context the rights of commonwealth citizens already working in developed countries must be preserved and fully protected.
- ◆ Develop and implement codes of conduct for ethical international recruitment, which cover all health sectors

Developing Countries should:

- ◆ **Prioritise** investment in the health sector, including workforce planning;
- ◆ **Raise motivation amongst health care workers** by improving the working conditions and remuneration, security at the workplace, supervision, career opportunities and medical supplies of health professionals.
- ◆ **Maximise their human resource potential** by developing training programmes to reflect national needs and working together with health care professionals.

Commonwealth countries collectively should co-operate to:

- ◆ **Facilitate and evaluate managed migration schemes** (such as bilateral or regional agreements), which balance the right to health of populations and individual human rights to migrate.
- ◆ **Promote and invest in link/exchange programmes** to create mutually beneficial twinning/exchange schemes between institutions, hospitals and health care associations (e.g. THET-NHS Links); In particular commonwealth exchange programmes should be encouraged.
- ◆ **Mobilise the resources in the health care diaspora** in a constructive and structured manner to enable migrant health professionals established in developed countries to contribute effectively to the development of their country of origin.
- ◆ **Exchange best practice on workforce planning tools** and data collection.

References

- (1) **Mullan F.** The metrics of the physician brain drain. *N Engl J Med* 2005;353:1810-1818
- (2) **Cooper RA, Getzen TE, McKee HJ, Laud P.** Economic and demographic trends signal an impending physician shortage. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 2002;21:140-154.

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