

Brazil to lure foreigners to fill public health posts

July 9 2013

Brazil launched a program Monday to lure thousands of foreign doctors to fill vacancies in its public health system, a move criticized by many domestic health care professionals.

Improving [public health services](#) was one of the key demands made by hundreds of thousands of Brazilians who staged three weeks of nationwide street protests last month.

President Dilma Rousseff said the initiative , which will be implemented by presidential decree, will involve 10,000 posts and an investment of around \$1.27 billion.

The government said the three-year posts, with a monthly pay of \$4,500, would be filled mainly by Brazilian doctors, but foreign counterparts would also be used to fill the gap.

Those selected will begin working in mid-September, mainly in the country's hinterland and poor suburbs of [major cities](#).

"Every Brazilian must have access to a doctor," Rousseff said. "Brazil is short of doctors. If we don't have enough in Brazil, we will look for good doctors wherever they are."

Foreign applicants must come from countries where there are more than 1.8 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, such as Spain, Portugal, Argentina or Cuba.

But the daily Folha de Sao Paulo reported Monday that the government dropped plans to import thousands of Cuban doctors and instead decided to turn to those from Spain and Portugal. There was no explanation as to why.

"It is an emergency measure to resolve a serious and urgent problem," Rousseff said. "Nobody should be afraid, I will never take away jobs from our professionals or put the health of the population at risk."

The [health ministry](#) said there was a shortage of 54,000 doctors across the country.

But Brazilian doctors' associations last month slammed the plan to lure foreign doctors, insisting that the problem was not a shortage of doctors but rather poor management and a lack of resources in the public health sector.

Doctors, nurses and other [health care professionals](#) last month joined the nationwide street protests to express their displeasure over the government program.

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