

Too little opportunity in the destination country for migrant health care workers

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Obstacles are put in the way of qualified medical staff with a migrant background

A recent intercontinental study, conducted by the Centre for Public Health, Department of General Medicine of MedUni Vienna using the example of women from sub-Saharan Africa has shown that, on the one hand, there is a shortage of qualified healthcare professionals but, on the other, huge obstacles are put in the way of qualified medical staff with a migrant background when they want to work abroad.

The international study looked at the situation of highly qualified female [healthcare workers](#) from Africa who are working in the five destination

countries: Austria, Belgium, UK, Botswana and South Africa. The study, which recently appeared in the leading journal *PLOS ONE*, showed that, despite their high standard of qualifications, nearly all the doctors and nurses questioned had to wait an average of between two and ten years before they were allowed to practice their profession in their destination country.

It was not easy to have their qualifications recognised in any of the five destination countries – despite the fact that there is a shortage of qualified healthcare workers in all five countries. There are therefore two sides to the problem: firstly, the country of origin is losing important and urgently needed professionals and, secondly, these qualified people are not being recognised in the destination country and used to their full capacity.

More rapid integration into the labour market is required

In this connection, the lead author, Silvia Wojczewski, scientific project worker in the Department of General Medicine of the Centre for Public Health at MedUni Vienna, makes the following appeal: "This study emphasises the need to integrate highly qualified migrants more quickly into the labour market of their destination countries and to avoid bureaucratic or racial discrimination." According to Wojczewski, a significant improvement could be made merely by speeding up the bureaucratic process and simplifying the recognition of the non-European qualifications of those affected.

Skill loss and racial discrimination

Because they were unable to integrate into the [labour market](#) of the destination countries, some of the women questioned changed profession

after a few years because they did not see any hope of working in their original profession, as a doctor or a nurse, in the destination country. In addition to this "skill loss", the study participants in all five destination countries surveyed, reported [racial discrimination](#), which they experienced professionally and also in their everyday lives.

EU project as a basis for the study

The basis of the study is the EU-funded intercontinental project HURAPRIM (Human Resources for Primary Health Care in Africa; www.huraprim.ugent.be/drupal/), in which 88 qualitative interviews were conducted with immigrants from different healthcare professions in five countries (Austria, Belgium, UK, Botswana, South Africa). The study analysed in-depth interviews with female doctors and nurses originating from 16 African countries.

More information: "African Female Physicians and Nurses in the Global Care Chain: Qualitative Explorations from Five Destination Countries." *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0129464.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26068218

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