Immigrants in Health Care

Medicine and Medical Science
Long-Term Care
Nursing

Marcia Drew Hohn, EdD
Retired Director
Public Education Institute
The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.
Malden, MA
Foreign-Born Share of Health Care Workers by Occupation, 2010

- Physicians & surgeons: 27%
- Nursing, psychiatric & home health aides: 22%
- Registered nurses: 15%
- Technologists & technicians: 12%
- Therapists: 10%

### International Medical School Graduates

#### Specialties Pursued by J-1 Physicians and USMGs, 2010-2011 Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>J-1 Visa Physicians</th>
<th>US Medical Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal medicine</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family medicine</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General surgery</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurology</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics and gynecology</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic surgery</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic radiology</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anesthesiology</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other specialties/subspecialties</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IMGs: A Critical Medical Workforce

- 75% stay to practice in U.S.
- 78% are in direct-care services
- Many practice in rural and inner-city settings filling unmet needs
Where IMGs Practice

Percentage of All Physicians Who Are IMGs: Top 20 States, 2012

Source: Association of American Medical Colleges: State Physician Workforce Data Book, 2015
Other Foreign-Born Physicians

- Those trained abroad face many credentialing challenges
- Many came to the U.S. as children and were educated and trained here
- Like the IMGs, they bring needed diversity and cultural understanding
- Have a large presence in medical science – 42% of cancer researchers in top 7 cancer research centers
Nam D. Tran

- Came to U.S. at age 8 as a refugee from Vietnam
- Became neuro-surgeon with PhD in neuroscience
- Now neuro-oncologist at Moffitt Cancer Center, FL
- Breakthrough cancer treatments
Nam D. Tran

Use this link to watch the video:
Immigrants in Long-Term Care

- An American turns 65 every 8 seconds, 72 million by 2050

- Living longer, often with multiple medical needs

- Shifts in ethnic and racial diversity in American population over 65, 2010 to 2050
  - White population declines from 80% to 58%
  - Hispanic population rises from 7% to 20%
  - Asian population rises from 4% to 12%
  - Black population rises from 9% to 12%
Home Health and Personal Care

- Fastest-growing segment in health care – projections for increases as much as 46% to 50%, 2008-2018
- Substantial gray market
- 28% of overall in-home care by immigrants
  - 83% in Miami
  - 61% in Los Angeles
  - 53% in Washington, D.C.
- Mostly female from Central America, Caribbean and Mexico
- 1 in 5 is undocumented (estimated)
Elizabeth Mande

- Refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Here many years before reunited with family
- Became Certified Nursing Assistant and works with patients with Alzheimer’s
“Immigrants are a crucial paraprofessional workforce in sheer numbers as well as being language and cultural assets.

“There are many skill issues to address, especially around English-language and use of technology, but investing in developing this workforce really pays off for the state in delivering health services and containing costs.

“In fact, I think the health care system in Boston would collapse without immigrants.”

Jerry Rubin
Director, Jewish Vocational Services of Greater Boston
Immigrants in Nursing

Percentage of Foreign-Born Nurses in the U.S., 2005-2012

Source: Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University: “Fact Sheet: Foreign-Born Nurses,” September 2014
Recruitment and Licensing: A Complex Picture

- Definitions/training systems
- Language and cultural issues for immigrant nurses
- Critical need for diversity in the field

**Sullivan Commission:**

“The lack of diversity in the health professions is compounding the national racial and ethnic health disparities.”

- Retiring nurses and limited pipeline are driving demand
- Welcome Back Centers and IMPRINT
Immigrants play critical roles in both the high-skilled arena of health care and in long-term care

- Fill vacancies
- Practice in under-served areas
- Bring linguistic and cultural competence
- Make it possible for rising senior population to “age in place”
- Stories illustrate ambition, hard work, persistence to “make it” and the courage and willingness to take risks
Some Recommendations

- Build greater awareness of immigrants’ vital role in health care
- Reduce barriers to licensure
- Increase investment in support and training programs
- Develop the home care workforce as integral to patient care plans
- Immigration reform