

Research

FAIMER seeks to understand the complex issues related to the supply of, training of, and need for physicians and other health care workers in various regions around the world. Based on FAIMER's mission, its research agenda, available data resources, and both existing and potential collaborations, resources are directed toward achievable projects, ones where outcome data can be mined or gathered to identify, track, and assess the educational experiences and migration patterns of international medical graduates. FAIMER research endeavors are categorized into three broad domains:

- International Migration of Physicians
- U.S. Physician Workforce Issues
- International Medical Education Programs

Within these areas, FAIMER staff designs and conducts studies focused on international medical education, including the quality of medical schools and their graduates, as well as international accreditation, licensure, and certification processes. These investigations are carried out, often in collaboration with other institutes and researchers, to help inform policy makers in government, academia, and various other interested organizations.

International Migration of Physicians

The international migration of physicians has been the focus of numerous research endeavors, both within the United States and elsewhere. For many countries, especially those located in developing regions, emigration has contributed to the decline in available health care workers, which can have an enormous negative impact on the health of local populations. For other countries, primarily developed nations, a shortage of sufficient local training resources has led to an undersupply of health professionals, yielding numerous opportunities for internationally trained workers who wish to emigrate. Although some nations may purposefully educate more physicians than are needed locally, others have recruited from nations that can scarcely afford to lose any of their limited human resources. From a population health perspective, the resulting global imbalance in professional workforces needs to be addressed. To do this, one must determine the scope of the problem and then gather data to better appreciate the specific push and pull factors underlying migration.

FAIMER collaborates with groups and individuals interested in the global migration of health care workers and its effect on local patient care, physician training, and workforce policies and projections. Among others, FAIMER has worked with the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the American Medical Association (AMA), and centers for workforce studies, health research centers, and several international medical councils. In cooperation with these groups, FAIMER has been actively involved in research aimed at quantifying medical migration and understanding the factors that drive the movement of physicians throughout the world.

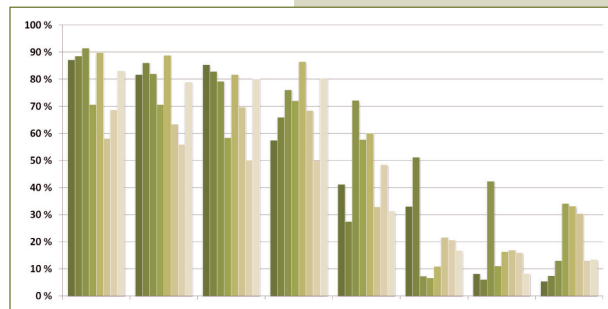
U.S. Physician Workforce Issues

Recent research suggests that the future supply of physicians in the United States will not be adequate to the country's health care needs. Though U.S. medical schools have expanded enrollment in an effort to address this shortage, it will take several years for any increases to yield a sufficient number of qualified practitioners. As a result, internationally educated physicians, who currently make up approximately 25% of the practicing physician workforce, will continue to play a role in U.S. health care services for some time, and a great deal of attention continues to be devoted to studying their qualifications and practice patterns.

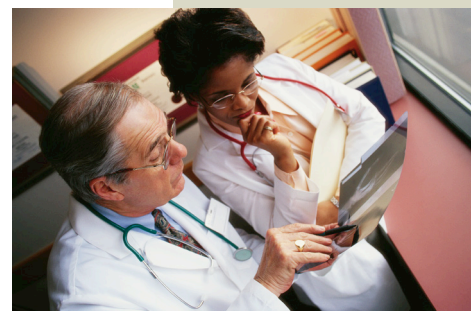
Since all international medical graduates (IMGs) must be certified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG®) to be eligible to enter accredited U.S. graduate medical education (GME) programs, both their demographic and examination performance data are available to ECFMG, dating back 50 years. As ECFMG's nonprofit foundation, FAIMER has analyzed these data to note changes in the characteristics of physicians who have pursued training opportunities in the United States. Because many of these physicians stay



*targeted research
to improve
medical
education and
global health*



*informing
public health
policy*



Creating knowledge and sharing it broadly with researchers, physicians, students, credentialing and licensing organizations, policy makers, and the public

in the United States following their graduate training, knowing more about their characteristics, including their intended specializations and likely practice locations, will aid future physician workforce planning.

Within this group of IMGs, there is particular interest in the characteristics of those who were U.S. citizens at the time they entered medical school. This cohort, which includes many individuals who attended medical schools in the Caribbean, is growing, not only in terms of enrollment, but also with respect to placement in U.S. GME programs and subsequent service in the U.S. health care system. While the expansion of U.S. medical school programs may provide additional educational opportunities for these individuals, many U.S. citizens who attend medical schools outside the United States never applied to U.S. allopathic or osteopathic medical programs. If these U.S. citizens start applying for, and enrolling in, U.S. medical schools, the characteristics and qualities of the IMG physician pool will certainly change. These changes, and their potential impact on both international and U.S. medical school programs, are currently being investigated.

International Medical Education Programs

FAIMER strives to better understand international medical education through its study of the educational experiences of medical school students and physician trainees around the world and how these experiences vary. To further this research, FAIMER collects descriptive and curricular information from medical schools throughout the world. In addition, surveys are mailed periodically to ministries of health and education and to medical councils to validate the information gathered from these medical schools. In addition to collecting information used to validate the recognition of international medical schools, respondents are asked to report on admission requirements, accreditation processes, and medical licensure criteria. The results of these surveys are used to further refine instruments for the collection of data on international medical education institutions and accreditation bodies, including the standards used to approve medical programs and the criteria employed to certify and license physicians. These data are being used on an ongoing basis to update and expand FAIMER's *Directory of Organizations that Recognize/Accredit Medical Schools (DORA)*.

FAIMER collaborates with ECFMG on a program through which international medical schools are provided with aggregate data on the United States Medical Licensing Examination® (USMLE®) performance of their students/graduates in exchange for information on the schools' curricula, student application requirements, enrollment, and clinical training practices. This exchange of information will provide a more detailed picture of international medical schools and their graduates, allowing FAIMER to expand its data resources and further its research on international medical education programs.

Cooperation and resource sharing with international organizations with common goals also contribute to FAIMER's research on international medical education programs. In 2014, FAIMER and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) launched the *World Directory of Medical Schools*. Developed in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the University of Copenhagen, the *World Directory* provides a comprehensive compilation of the information previously contained in FAIMER's *International Medical Education Directory (IMED)* and WFME's *Avicenna Directory*. Sponsors of the *World Directory*, who help inform decisions about criteria for inclusion and data collection, include several major accreditation and medical regulatory authorities. These international collaborations are instrumental for the development of high-quality data resources and the advancement of research on international medical education programs.

Learn More

For more information on FAIMER's research activities, visit the FAIMER website at www.faimer.org.

Collaborate

Organizations and individuals who wish to explore collaborative research opportunities are invited to contact FAIMER by email at research@faimer.org.

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