

EXPERTS IN OUR MIDST

RECOGNISING THE CONTRIBUTION NHS DIASPORA STAFF MAKE TO GLOBAL HEALTH



There has been a 60% rise in the number of migrant doctors and nurses working in OECD countries over the last decade, and the UK is one of the major beneficiaries. Almost 1 in 7 NHS staff report a non-British nationality. [‘Experts in Our Midst: Recognising the contribution NHS diaspora staff make to global health’](#) celebrates the contribution these individuals are making to the NHS and shines a light on the relatively unexplored territory of how they are contributing to health globally, connecting the NHS to over 200 health systems around the world.



At its core, the report argues that the expertise of diaspora NHS staff in global health is both significantly underestimated and underutilized, including in the work [THET](#) promotes through Health Partnerships. This has an adverse impact both on the quality of our work in global health and, more widely, the ability of the NHS to learn from other health systems at a time of pandemic. It builds on earlier policy work from THET in the form of our inquiry in to innovation, which asked, [How can the UK learn more from Africa and Asia?](#) and our 2019 report on workforce migration, [‘From Competition to Collaboration’](#). The report contains a series of recommendations on how to take this work forward.

[Experts in Our Midst](#) seeks to chart an ethical way forward for policymakers in the UK and overseas, offering recommendations that enable, engage, and empower. The report is brought to life by case studies and personal testimonies from diaspora staff themselves, and with expert contributions from Health Partnerships, diaspora organisations, and NHS bodies. It was overseen by a steering group of eminent figures in diaspora engagement, chaired by Frances Day-Stirk, a long-serving Trustee of THET and former President of the International Confederation of Midwives and herself a member of the diaspora. Forewords are provided by Onyekachi Wambu (The African Foundation for Development) and Dr Navina Evans (Health Education England).

KEY POINTS

1. Diaspora NHS staff make valuable contributions to the UK and global health systems.

However, insufficient recognition is given to the skills and relationships they hold. This presents the NHS and those working in global health, including THET, with an opportunity. Fully harnessing the expertise of diaspora staff will benefit the NHS and improve the quality of the partnership we offer low- and middle-income country health systems.

2. Unconscious bias and persistent racism limit the ability of the NHS to learn from diaspora staff expertise.

We need to acknowledge these barriers if the NHS is to benefit fully from their knowledge of other health systems. Health systems must work towards race equality, by designing and implementing policies and programmes that centre the voices and needs of diaspora NHS staff.

3. Inclusion is fundamental to the NHS of the future and must be driven by inclusive leadership.

Diaspora health care workers are under-represented in NHS leadership roles, limiting the UK health system’s ability to respond to increasing population diversity and to reduce associated health inequalities. Supporting diaspora engagement in global health activity is one way by which both leadership skills and inclusivity can be improved.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

THET creates a diversity network drawing from a multidisciplinary membership... and that NHS Trusts' BAME Staff Networks engage with this network to support the engagement of diaspora NHS staff with countries of heritage.

Health Education England consults with diaspora NHS staff to gauge the desirability of matching diaspora NHS staff to placements in countries of heritage through its Improving Global Health through Leadership Development programme.

NHS England & NHS Improvement develop an approach for other health professions, similar to the commendable work it is doing to support diaspora nursing associations, including with small grants and scholarships.

Health Partnerships develop plans that engage the UK diaspora of the LMIC they are partnering with, where synergy exists, and that **NHS England and NHS Improvement's sponsorship of a network of International Nursing Associations** is used as an exemplar for other health professions.

That the UK's FCDO & DHSC develop a strategy for diaspora engagement, in partnership with the NHS. This could form part of any update to the UK Government's global health strategy.

The report was written by THET's former Head of Policy and Learning, Graeme Chisholm, and funded by Health Education England. For further information please contact THET's Head of Policy and Learning on kit.chalmers@thet.org.

ABOUT THET

THET is a global health organisation with a vision of a world where everyone has access to quality healthcare. For over 30 years we have been working to achieve this by training and educating health workers in Africa and Asia in partnership with organisations and volunteers from across the UK. Founded in 1988 by Professor Sir Eldryd Parry, we are the only UK charity with this focus. In the past ten years alone, THET has reached over 100,000 health workers across 31 countries in Africa and Asia in partnership with over 130 UK institutions.

THET's unique position at the centre of the Health Partnership community allows us to harness and coordinate expertise from across the UK health system. This kind of collaboration supports the equality, diversity, and inclusion of NHS diaspora staff.

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