

Research

FAIMER is committed to research activities that can help advance international medical education and, ultimately, global health. Both short- and long-term research goals, including broad objectives and associated focus areas, have been developed to direct research efforts to identify, track, and assess the educational experiences and migration patterns of international medical graduates. Targeting certain key areas will help disentangle the complex issues related to the supply of, and need for, physicians in various regions around the world. FAIMER research endeavors are categorized into three broad domains:

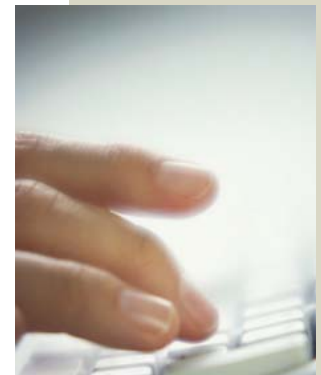
- International Migration of Physicians
- U.S. Physician Workforce Issues
- International Medical Education

Within these broad domains, 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, including nurses and physicians. The lack of service providers can, in turn, have an enormous negative impact on the health of local populations. For other countries, primarily developed nations, the 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 must be addressed. To do this in a meaningful way, a quantification of the problem, including gathering data to better appreciate the push and pull factors underlying migration, must first be undertaken.

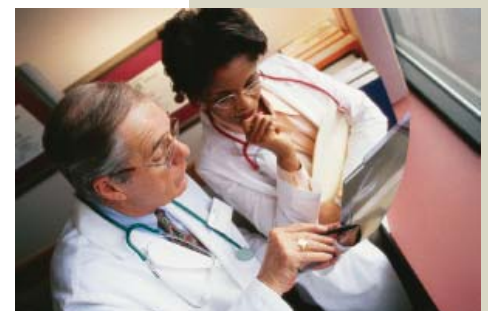
FAIMER continues to be involved with other groups and individuals interested in the global migration of health care workers and its effect on local patient care, physician training, and workforce policies and projections. Among others, FAIMER has collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO), 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.



*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

U.S. Physician Workforce Issues

A number of recent research reports have provided evidence to suggest that the future supply of physicians in the United States will not be adequate. While addressing this shortage can be accomplished, in part, by augmenting U.S. medical school enrollment, it will take several years for any increases to yield qualified practitioners. As a result, internationally educated physicians continue to play a role in U.S. health care services. These individuals currently make up more than 25% of the practicing physician workforce. Since all international medical graduates (IMGs) must be certified by ECFMG to be eligible to enter accredited U.S. graduate medical education (GME) programs, both demographic and examination performance data are available to FAIMER, dating back 50 years. These data have been analyzed to note changes in the characteristics of physicians who pursue training opportunities in the United States. Because many of these physicians stay 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. As medical schools in the United States expand, it is likely they will draw from this pool of U.S. citizens who currently pursue their medical education abroad. This is likely to have some impact on the characteristics and qualities of the IMG physician pool.

International Medical Education

FAIMER strives to be the single best source of data on international medical schools and their graduates. With this in mind, work has been done to create, assemble, and refine high quality data repositories. FAIMER maintains several such data resources that are freely available online; these include the *International Medical Education Directory (IMED)*, the *Directory of Organizations that Recognize/Accredit Medical Schools (DORA)*, and directories of International Opportunities in Medical Education (IOME) and Master's Programs in Health Professions Education.

FAIMER collects descriptive and curricular information on medical schools, and the organizations that recognize and accredit them, throughout the world. To validate the information gathered from international medical schools, surveys are mailed periodically to ministries of health and education, as well as medical councils. 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. The results of these surveys are used to further refine instruments for the collection of data on medical schools and accreditation bodies, including the standards used to approve medical programs and the criteria employed to certify and license physicians.

To further research on international medical education, FAIMER cooperates and shares resources with international organizations with common goals. Most recently, in cooperation with the World Health Organization and the World Federation for Medical Education, FAIMER is sharing medical school data with the University of Copenhagen to assist with their development of the Avicenna Directories, an electronic database of international health professions education programs.

Learn More

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

Collaborate

Organizations and individuals that wish to explore collaborative research opportunities are invited to contact FAIMER by e-mail at research@faimer.org.

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