Globalization and health care: Challenges and opportunities for New Zealand

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Some background

- International mobility affects the entire New Zealand population.
- About almost a quarter of New Zealand’s population are born overseas.
- A similar proportion of the New Zealand-born population does not live in New Zealand.
- But mobility is particularly evident in relation to the health workforce.
- New Zealand has the highest proportion of overseas born doctors in the OECD countries and one of the highest proportions of migrant nurses.
Some other key shifts in the health workforce

- a feminisation of doctors
- an ‘Asian-isation’ of key segments of the health workforce
- an ageing of some areas of the health workforce
- an increasing reliance on temporary migration
Some questions

- where is it likely that New Zealand’s future health workforce will come from?
- do we need to be concerned about New Zealand attracting health professional from areas of greater need?
- how useful will be concepts of ‘cultural concordance’ in New Zealand’s bicultural/multicultural setting?
- is there room for Australia and New Zealand to co-operate in health workforce planning or will we be competing for workers?
Women as a % of doctors, 1986 to 2006

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Asians in the health sector compared to other ethnic groups
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Occupations of Asians in the health sector

- Professionals: Highly Skilled
- Legislators, Administrators and Managers:
- Technicians and Associate Professionals: Skilled
- Clerks: Semi-skilled / Elementary
- Service and Sales Workers:

Bar chart showing the percentage of Asians and the total employed in NZ in each category.
Cultural concordance?

- One response to the poor outcomes for Māori and Pacific people has been a push to increase Māori and Pacific capacity in the health sector.
- For a variety of reasons it is a good idea to increase the number of Māori and Pacific health workers.
- But ‘globalisation’ is running faster than ‘localisation’, especially for doctors.
Selected characteristics of doctors in each DHB area and % of total population who are Māori, 2006
Doctors in Counties Manukau DHB, 2006

- Percent of doctors overseas born
- Percent of doctors Asian
- % of population who are Maori
- Percent of doctors Maori
- Percent of doctors Te Reo Speakers
Some more about te reo

- Overall there are very few doctors, nurses or caregivers who speak Te Reo
- Hardly any overseas born doctors speak Te Reo
- Ability to speak Te Reo is most common amongst Māori caregivers followed by Māori nurses. But in both cases the majority (over two thirds) do not speak Te Reo
- The second most likely group to speak Te Reo are Pacific health workers
Competing with Australia

- when adjusted for purchasing power parity overall Australian incomes for people aged 25-44 in 2006 were 25% higher than New Zealand incomes

- Health professionals – yearly earnings 20% higher
- Carers and aides - yearly earnings 49% higher
- Health and welfare support workers - yearly earnings 42% higher
Some conclusions

- The New Zealand health sector employers face major challenges in relation to training, attracting, and retaining a workforce that is both technically and culturally competent.

- The New Zealand health workforce is increasingly female, Asian and diverse in languages and cultural practices.
This diversity can be a real strength with an increasingly diverse client base.

But issues such as language skills for effective communication also are a challenge.

The goal of increasing the number of Māori and Pacific health professionals is a very worthy one.

But given the evidence of the speed of globalisation of the workforce the sector needs to look beyond ‘cultural concordance’ as a key means of improving outcomes.