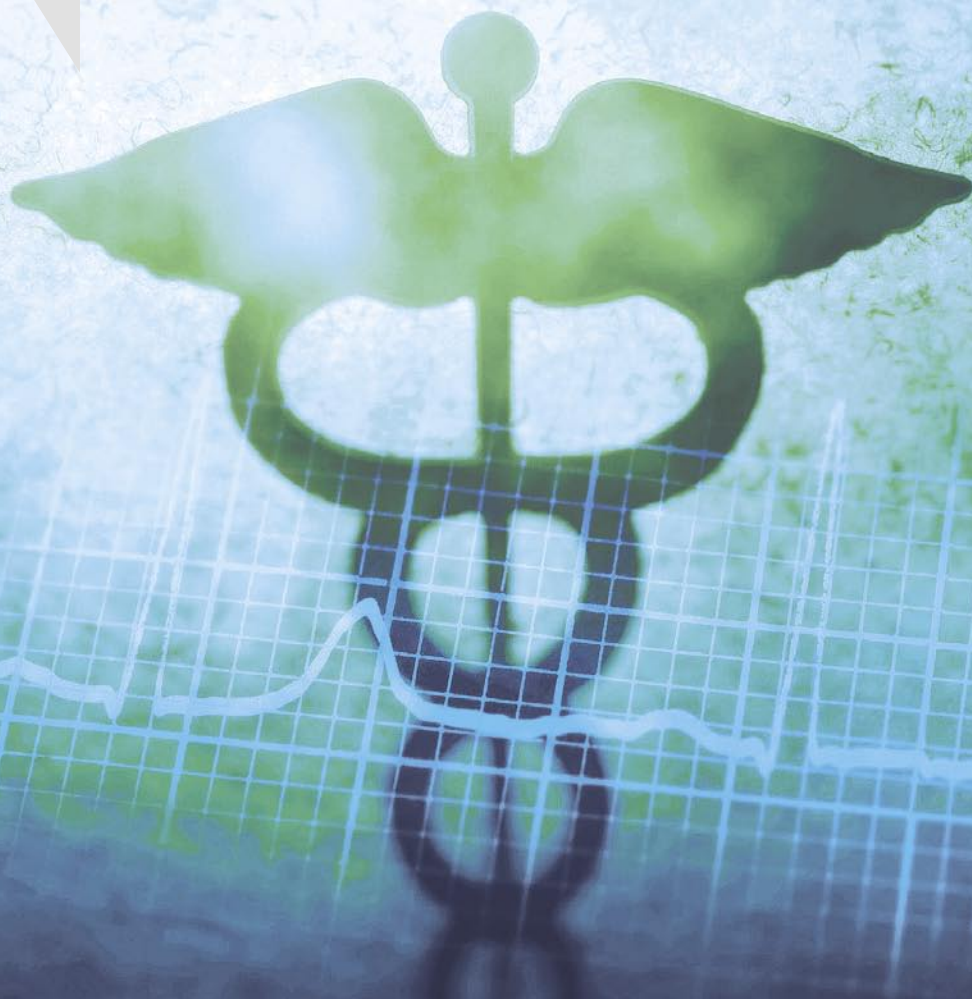




OECD Health Policy Studies

The Looming Crisis in the Health Workforce

HOW CAN OECD COUNTRIES RESPOND?



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Foreword

This publication examines the relationship between the international migration of health workers – both within the OECD area and between the rest of the world and the OECD area – and health workforce policies in OECD countries. It assesses how the supply of health workers, particularly that of doctors and nurses, has adjusted to demand in different countries, taking account of migration among other inflows and outflows of health professionals.

The report is one of the main outputs of a project on health workforce policies and international migration, which was undertaken by the OECD in co-operation with the WHO between 2005 and 2008. This publication draws from and is the synthesis of various OECD analyses. First, it uses the findings of a chapter in the 2007 Edition of the International Migration Outlook on “Immigrant Health Workers in OECD Countries in the Broader Context of Highly-skilled Migration”, which had reviewed recent migration flows and policies for health workers in OECD countries, based on data on the stock of doctors and nurses by country of training/birth. Second, the report builds from case studies on workforce policies and international migration in Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States. Third, it reviews previous OECD analysis on the supply of physician services in OECD countries, ways to tackle nurse shortages, and the health workforce skill mix, as well as relevant policy studies and academic literature.

Within the OECD, the work has been undertaken jointly by the Health Division and by the International Migration and Non-member Economies Division, of the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. The main authors of the report are, in alphabetical order, Francesca Colombo, Jean-Christophe Dumont, Jeremy Hurst and Pascal Zurn. Christine Le Thi provided statistical assistance, and Gabrielle Luthy provided secretarial support. The team is grateful for the support and advice received from Elizabeth Docteur, Martine Durand, Jean-Pierre Garson, John Martin and Peter Scherer.

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The project was undertaken jointly by the OECD and the World Health Organization: one of the authors of this report, Pascal Zurn, is a WHO official who was seconded to the OECD to work on the project. We are grateful to the Swiss authorities for the financial contribution which supported this secondment.

The project has also been co-financed by a grant provided by the Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission. Nonetheless, the views expressed in this report should not be taken to reflect the official position of the European Union.



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HOW CAN OECD COUNTRIES RESPOND?

OECD countries face a challenge in responding to the growing demand for doctors and nurses over the next 20 years. This arises in a world which is already characterised by significant international migration of health workers, both across OECD countries and between some developing countries and the OECD area.

What combination of human-resource management policies and migration policies have OECD countries adopted? How do migration and other health-workforce policies interact with each other? How can destination countries build a sustainable health workforce? What are the consequences of emigration of doctors and nurses for origin countries?

This book provides new evidence on each of these questions and identifies possible ways forward. It is the main outcome of a joint OECD-WHO project on the management of health-related human resources and international migration.

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