



NEWS

Number of British doctors working in Australia and New Zealand is rising

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The BMJ

Registry data are showing a rise in the number of UK trained doctors who are registered to work in Australia and New Zealand. A total of 699 more doctors from the UK were registered to practise in Australia in 2016 than in 2014, a 17% rise (from 4182 to 4881), show data from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency ([U](#)).

Over the same period the number of UK doctors who were registered to practise in New Zealand also rose by 17% (from 424 to 497), but the number of UK trained doctors who were registered to work in the US was 1.4% lower in 2016 than in 2014.

In July 2017 a total of 232 708 doctors were registered with the UK General Medical Council to practise medicine.

Concern arose during the dispute over the new contract for junior doctors in England in 2015 and 2016 that many doctors would leave the NHS.^{1,2} A survey conducted in October 2015 of 4150 junior doctors found that nearly three quarters (72%) said that they planned to leave the NHS if the government imposed a new contract in August 2016,³ which went ahead.

Doctors who wish to practise abroad often need a certificate of current professional status (CCPS) (also known as a certificate of good standing) from the GMC, a document that enables them to register with an overseas regulatory body or employer.

The GMC said that between mid-September 2015 and mid-February 2016 it saw a large increase in the number of CCPS applications after junior doctors used it as a way to protest against proposed changes to their contract ([U](#)). But it said that it could not distinguish between doctors making a protest application and those actually considering working abroad.

Not all doctors who request a certificate actually leave the UK. Despite the peak in applications in 2015, the proportion of doctors issued with certificates who remained registered with the GMC was similarly high across the period. Of the doctors who were issued with a CCPS in 2014, 86% (4362) remain licensed with the GMC, as do 94% (8106) of those issued with a CCPS in 2015 and 94% (6143) of those issued with a CCPS in 2016.

Jeeves Wijesuriya, chair of the BMA Junior Doctors Committee, said that the figures would come as no surprise to those working in the “overstretched, under-resourced NHS.”

He said, “We can’t underestimate the impact that working under constant and extreme pressure has on the morale and wellbeing of our workforce, which can lead to doctors taking extended time off to recover from stress and burnout or leave the NHS altogether.

“We need an urgent plan from the government to address the workload, workforce, and funding issues facing the NHS, otherwise these numbers will only continue to rise, undermining the NHS’s ability to meet rising demand on service and leaving those left in the NHS working under even more pressure.”

1 Limb M. Thousands of junior doctors march against new contract. *BMJ* 2015;351:h5572. doi:10.1136/bmj.h557226482202

2 Rimmer A. Junior contract will be imposed, Hunt announces. *BMJ* 2016;352:i885. doi:10.1136/bmj.i88526869587

3 Kmietowicz Z. Seven in 10 junior doctors will leave NHS if new contract is imposed, survey finds. *BMJ* 2015;351:h5642. doi:10.1136/bmj.h564226494634

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Tables

Table 1| No of UK trained doctors registered to work in Australia, New Zealand, and US

	2014	2015	2016
Australia	4182	4459	4881
New Zealand	424	357	497
United States	2494	2452	2459
Total	7100	7268	7837

Table 2| No of doctors issued with certificate of current professional status by GMC

2014	2015	2016
4925	8625	6534