GP EXODUS FROM THE PROFESSION

Proportion of registered doctors leaving the UK remains consistently low

Niall Dickson chief executive and registrar
General Medical Council, London NW1 3JN, UK

Iacobucci’s article on comments from the Royal College of General Practitioners highlights the difficulty in drawing simple conclusions from the available data.1

The General Medical Council issues certificates of good standing (CGS) on behalf of UK registered doctors to other regulators and employers to confirm that they are not subject to current fitness to practise proceedings. Because these certificates have a three month “shelf life,” doctors may need to request several when contemplating working overseas. As such, the number of doctors leaving the UK cannot be accurately gauged by the number of CGSs issued. Similarly, doctors requesting a CGS do not have to say why they are considering a move.

There has been a 20% increase from 2008 to 2013, but because the numbers are small the overall impact is minimal. The proportion of registered doctors with UK qualifications requesting a CGS has remained consistently low (around 2%) for the past five years.

It is wrong to suggest that there has been a 30% rise in doctors requesting a CGS.1 This is the figure for the volume of CGS certificates issued, not the number of doctors making the request. In addition, although a CGS request may indicate an intention to practise abroad, many doctors who request one do not leave, and of those who do, some later return to practise here.

Doctors form part of a global workforce and the UK has benefited from this. Of course none of this is to deny the pressures on UK doctors and that some of them may be considering working abroad.

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Full response at: www.bmj.com/content/349/bmj.g5828/rr/765584.

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occe@gmc-uk.org

1 Iacobucci G. GP leader warns of exodus from the profession. BMJ 2014;349:g5828. (23 September.)