

## **WORKING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### INFORMATION FOR FOREIGN QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

RuDASA has launched a Recruitment Project, in collaboration with the Rural Health Initiative, to assist rural hospitals in South Africa to obtain suitably qualified health professional staff. Funded by the Canadian International Development agency (CIDA) and Discovery, and supported by the national Department of Health, the project aims to link South African and overseas doctors and other health care professionals with hospitals in great need. For more information, contact Tracey Hudson (<mailto:placements@rhi.org.za>) or go to Recruitment of Doctors for rural hospitals. Initial information for foreign qualified doctors is also available on this site

#### **The position of RuDASA**

RuDASA believes that the long term solution for rural health care in South Africa is adequate and appropriate training of South Africans to meet the needs for health care professionals in underserved rural areas. We are involved in a number of initiatives to lobby for and address these needs. (See elsewhere on this site, including scholarship schemes and electives programmes). We also support the principle of the Melbourne Manifesto with respect to the need for a Code to govern the International Recruitment of Health Care Professionals.

Within this context, it is obvious that we in South Africa will remain reliant on the services of foreign qualified doctors to staff our rural health services for many years to come. Much of rural health care in this country has only developed through the input of overseas trained doctors, many of them in the past coming through missionary and philanthropic agencies. We owe a great debt to them. Foreign doctors have continued to provide a very important service during the transition to democracy in South Africa, many of these coming from other African countries, causing great loss of doctors from these countries in turn. The more recent difficulties created for foreign doctors, in an attempt to address this migration southwards, mainly in the form of barriers to Medical Board registration and lack of co-operation from the authorities with regard to issuing work permits to doctors already working here, have both prevented many willing health professionals from coming to South Africa and encouraged many already working here to leave for more developed countries, thus creating crises in rural areas all over the country. The establishment of community service for all health care professionals and the employment of Cuban doctors on a government-to-government agreement have not been sufficient to address these crises.

We have lobbied persistently for a change in this situation, as part of an overall rural health strategy, and welcome the new developments in this regard, whereby the Department of Health has again started to recruit foreign qualified health professionals, the Health Professions Council to register foreign doctors without necessarily requiring an examination, and the Department of Home Affairs to issue work visas for 3 year periods.

There are still many issues to be resolved, such as the position of doctors from developing countries, and administrative hurdles to be crossed, as officials adapt to the new policies, but we believe this is a major step forward.

We thus invite our suitably qualified generalist colleagues from overseas to explore the possibility of coming to assist us in rural South Africa, where the challenges are as great as the rewards.

(For hospital listings, look at the student electives section, or contact one of the RuDASA committee members.)

Current policies and procedures

In view of the shortage of doctors in rural areas, within the Public Health Service in South Africa, the National Department of Health is seeking to recruit doctors and

other health care professionals from overseas countries. The stated policy of the government is to recruit only from developed countries, and only for public service in rural areas. Full details of the Policy of the Department of Health and the Guidelines to be followed are provided on this site for your assistance. (Please note that this information is supplied by the Department of Health and its use here does not necessarily indicate endorsement by RuDASA.)

In line with the government policy to recruit from developed countries, and in view of the serious shortage of doctors in rural areas, the Medical and Dental Professions Board (MDPB) of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) will consider registering foreign qualified applicants without examination. Essentially, the Board has allowed for a mechanism to fast-track of registration for doctors from developed countries.

Foreign doctors who apply to the HPCSA for registration will have their qualifications reviewed by the Examinations and Assessment Committee. If they are from an appropriate country, have a medical degree recognised as being of a good standard educationally, through curriculum reviews conducted by the HPCSA, and have appropriate post-internship experience and training, they may be assessed as eligible for registration without having to sit the HPCSA examination. The registration will be for public service practice only, and not independent practice, for a period of 3 years, potentially renewable.

The examination for registration for public service practice will continue to be held two or three annually for those doctors who do not meet these criteria, and who thus need additional assessment.

For more information go to the website of the Health Professions Council. Within the Council, registration of doctors (physicians) falls under the Medical and Dental Professions Board. Forms for registration of Foreign Qualified Practitioners are obtainable at <http://www.hpcsa.co.za/professional-boards/Medical%20and%20Dental/Registration/Medical%20and%20Dental.html>.

The contact person in the Medical and Dental Professions Board is Ms Thembisile Nkosi, ThembisileN@hpcsa.co.za. Tel. +27 12 338 9350. The general HPCSA number is +27 12 3389300

Doctors who experience difficulties with this process may wish to contact Prof. Jannie Hugo, a member of the MDPB Executive Committee (<mailto:jh38@mweb.co.za>) or Prof. Ian Couper, the RuDASA representative on the MDPB Committee for General Practice ([couperid@medicine.wits.ac.za](mailto:couperid@medicine.wits.ac.za)).

Any Foreign Qualified Health Professional that is interested in working in S.A. should contact the Rural Health Initiative

[Please note that RuDASA cannot be held accountable for the accuracy of the above information, which is provided as a service to rural health in South Africa, without any obligation on the part of the Association. RuDASA is also not responsible for government or HPCSA policy decisions so cannot provide details of or motivations for them.]

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