

COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

on the Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

September 10, 2010

TO:

Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State
Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Cc:

Amie Batson, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Global Health, USAID
Nils Daulaire, MD, MPH, Director, Office of Global Health Affairs
Sandra Polaski, MA, Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs, Department of Labor
Edward Salsberg, MPA, Director, National Center for Workforce Analysis, Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration
Rajiv Shah, MD, MS, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development
Mary Wakefield, PhD, RN, Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration

Dear Secretary Clinton and Secretary Sebelius,

We the undersigned, wish to applaud the Administration's support of the World Health Organization's new Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, which, after six years of discussions and preliminary drafts, was adopted by the World Health Assembly in Geneva on May 21, 2010. As organizations and individuals with a longstanding interest in this area, we are enthusiastic about supporting the Administration as it considers ways to encourage compliance with the Code.

Content of the Code

As you know, the Code calls on the WHO's Director General (DG) to develop guidelines for a minimum data set that each country is asked to report, and further directs the DG to compile information on each country's relevant laws and regulations at the national and international levels pertaining to health worker migration. In addition, the Code asks the DG to develop suggestions for information exchange mechanisms. The DG must report to the 2013 World Health Assembly, and make subsequent reports at least every three years.

Member States are encouraged to:

1. Establish a national authority on reporting (the WHO is to maintain a registry of these national authorities)
2. Establish national workforce migration research programs
3. Develop frameworks that strengthen health systems by mitigating the negative effects of migration
4. Ensure that recruiters and employers observe fair and just recruitment and contractual practices in the employment of migrant health personnel
5. Recognize the right to highest standard of health as well as the right to migrate
6. Promote fair labor standards for migrant health personnel, while ensuring recruited health workers meet any binding obligations in their home countries
7. Develop sustainable ways for all nations to meet workforce needs
8. Promote circular migration
9. Develop bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries (Note: *Realizing Rights* has prepared sample bilateral agreements)

US responsibility in global health worker migration trends

Given that one in four physicians to the U.S. is trained abroad (64 percent of these from a lower-income country) [1], and the proportion of foreign educated nurses hit a high of 13 percent of newly licensed nurses in 2007[2], we believe the U.S. bears a special responsibility in regard to the recruitment of international health professionals.

Other coalitions in the U.S. have produced two related ethical codes regarding health workforce issues in low-income countries. We believe these voluntary codes are part of a package of guidelines to ensure ethical global health practices with regard to human resources for health.

- *Voluntary Code of Ethical Conduct for the Recruitment of Foreign-Educated Nurses to the United States* (Developed by the Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices,¹ a non-profit working to ensure recruitment of foreign-educated nurses to the United States is conducted in an ethical, responsible, and transparent way.) This group is currently expanding its Code to include allied health workers.
- *Non-Government Organization (NGO) Code of Conduct for Health Systems Strengthening*² (Developed at University of Washington's Health Alliance International, along with like-minded NGOs.) Principals involved with these codes are also involved with the current effort to support the WHO Code of Practice.

The undersigned organizations and individuals have a long-standing interest in the ethical implications of the U.S. reliance on foreign educated health professionals. We stand ready to assist the national authority designated by the U.S. government for purposes of implementing the WHO Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

Sincerely,

See additional organizational and individual signatures below

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¹ <http://www.fairinternationalrecruitment.org/>

² <http://ngocodeofconduct.org/>

ORGANIZATIONAL SIGNATURES:

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Health Alliance International
Health Workforce Advocacy Initiative
IntraHealth
Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare
Nursing Alliance for Quality Care
Physicians for Human Rights
Service Employees International Union 9

Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices, member groups:

American Hospital Association (AHA)
Federation of American Hospitals (FAH)
National Association of Health Care Recruitment
American Nurses Association
National Federation of Nurses
American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
AFT Healthcare
National Association of Indian Nurses of America (NAINA)
Philippine Nurses Association of America
Johns Hopkins Health System
GlobalCare, Inc.
O'Grady Peyton International
American Association of International Healthcare Recruitment
National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)
Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare

References

1. Hagopian, A., et al., *The migration of physicians from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States of America: measures of the African brain drain*. Hum Resour Health, 2004. **2**(1): p. 17.
2. Pittman, P., L.H. Aiken, and J. Buchan, *International migration of nurses: introduction*. Health Serv Res, 2007. **42**(3 Pt 2): p. 1275-80.

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**WHO Code of Practice
On the International Recruitment of Health Personnel:
Toward Implementation in the United States**
George Washington University Medical Center

Wednesday, August 10 • 10:00 am - 3:30 pm ET

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