

International perspectives on nurse migration flow pre- during and post-Covid-19

Background: The United Nations Global Compact for Migration in 2018 touted optimism for a more secure international migration of persons which would strengthen the development of health systems in low- and middle-income countries but the COVID-19 pandemic caused dramatic setbacks in exertions to make migration safer also for health professionals. Advanced countries that heavily relied on international nursing mobility have witnessed a huge reduction in nursing flows during the pandemic. However, they will probably continue relying, in significant measure on international inflow of nurses as they did pre-COVID-19.

Methods: Specific Codes have been investigated to retrieve strategies to attain a more ethical health professionals' recruitment over the pandemic period of time. The Commonwealth Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Health Workers designed to promote ethical employment and mitigate the impact on former UK dependencies, the World Health Organization Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel and the Health Care Code for Ethical International Recruitment and Employment Practices overseen by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices were analysed.

Results: These regional codes are able to localize economic, social and labour concerns to better ensure that migrant workers are treated the same or even better than their domestic counterparts. These codes are well positioned to engage on topics such as healthcare staff or orientation, recruitment fees and prevailing wages – issues that affect many migrant healthcare professionals.

Discussion: A study from CGFNS and the Alliance for Ethical International Recruitment Practices found that progress is indeed being made in preventing predatory recruitment, but that many process concerns remain, including high contract breach fees and inadequate orientation. In a post-pandemic world, many of these concerns are severely exacerbated by health systems facing continued shortages. We hope that as international travel restarts, nurse recruiters pay heed to ethical codes so that migrant nurses are treated fairer and all global citizens benefit equitably from the health professional workforce.