Characteristics of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in the U.S. Family Medicine Workforce

Susan Lin, Dr.PH 1; Richard Younge MD, MPH 1; Kathleen Klink MD, FAAFP 2

Introduction

• There has been a steady increase in the number of international medical graduates (IMGs) in the US health workforce since the 1970s.

• Understanding characteristics of IMGs and source countries of IMGs has policy implications for the US and source countries.

• This study describes the role of IMGs in the U.S. family medicine workforce from 2000 to 2013.

Methods

• The AMA Physician Masterfile was used to describe practicing family physicians including IMGs and USMGs in the United States from 2000 to 2013.

• This study analyzed trends in the number, demographics, and practice locations of IMGs compared with USMGs.

Results

• Number of IMGs increased from 9,632 in 2000 to 17,808 in 2013. The proportion of IMGs in the US family medicine workforce increased from 14.5% to 19.2% in the same period.

• IMGs under age 40 increased from 11% to 20% while the USMGs under age 40 decreased from 26% to 15%.

• Women are represented by increased percentages in both the IMG group (from 24% to 41%) and the USMG group (from 24% to 36%).

• IMGs in 2013 graduated from schools of 128 different nations, with India and the Philippines the top two source nations.

• The pattern of IMGs working in rural areas (11%) and underserved areas (21%) has not changed and is similar to that of USMGs.

Conclusions

• IMGs continue to increase their presence in the US family medicine workforce.

• The increasing U.S. reliance on medical graduates from low income nations to provide primary care remains controversial.