INTEGRATING REFUGEE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS INTO THE NHS


June 2003
Purpose

1. This report provides an update on the efforts and achievements of the Department of Health Refugee Health Professional Steering Group throughout 2001 and 2002. The report particularly focuses on the impact of DH funding in supporting refugee health professionals in their efforts to seek employment in the NHS.

Background

2. The UK Government is committed to tackling the problems which refugees face and to facilitating their integration into UK society. At the same time, the NHS has a continuing need for qualified health professional staff, and acknowledges the invaluable contribution made by overseas-qualified professionals. We do not have reliable figures for the number of refugee health professionals in the UK and estimates vary. However, they are a cost effective source of staff for the NHS. The cost of re-training or integrating a trained refugee health professional into the NHS is significantly lower than the cost of training UK nationals.

3. A Government commissioned Working Group (part of the Advisory Group on Medical and Dental Education Training and Staffing) was set up in December 1998 to consider the issues affecting overseas health professionals. It made recommendations designed to ensure that the particular needs of medically and dentally qualified refugees were identified and their skills used to the benefit of NHS patients. On 2 November 2000, Mr John Denham, Minister of State for Health at the time, officially launched these recommendations in ‘The Report of the Working Group on Refugee Doctors and Dentists.’

4. A high profile Steering Group was formed in early 2001 to manage, co-ordinate and promote the programme outlined in the Report, allocating funding and considering parallel initiatives for other healthcare professionals. The membership and terms of reference for the Steering Group is attached at Annex A.

Immediate problems facing refugee health professionals in the UK

5. Many refugees face enormous difficulties in resuming their health professional careers having arrived in the UK. This may be due to a number of factors:

- they may have had to overcome difficulties with their asylum application;
- they may feel under pressure to take alternative employment under New Deal rules;
- they may have been well advanced in their careers and now have difficulty in adjusting to the ‘training mode’ which might be required to allow them to acquire registration in the UK;
- their training may have been interrupted;
- their documentation may have been lost or destroyed;
they may have difficulty in securing references;
they may not currently speak English well, if at all;
they may have no contact with family members or other support networks;
they may have difficulty in accessing appropriate information.

6. These difficulties add to the trauma they may have experienced in their personal lives and which has led them to seek refuge in the UK. It is likely that those granted refugee status will, in all probability, not have planned carefully to leave their home countries.

**Funding for projects 2001 & 2002**

7. The Steering Group has addressed the issues listed above through the allocation of Department of Health funding to projects specifically aimed at supporting the integration of refugees into the NHS workforce.

8. The Steering Group chose to support projects in this way as it was seen as the most sustainable way of promoting refugee integration into the NHS workforce. Funding projects, as opposed to individual refugees, has helped foster a more collaborative and long term approach amongst the NHS and education providers. Many of the projects are now providing systems and partnerships that can be replicated through mainstream workforce strategies. The Steering Group is not viewed as a source of long term or permanent funding.

9. The Steering Group assessed bids based on the following criteria:

   - Bids should demonstrate that the funds will be used to assist in the implementation of one or more of the services listed below:

     (a) Provide language teaching services;
     (b) Establish and maintain local support networks for refugee health professionals;
     (c) Support and help refugee doctors in securing appropriate clinical attachments;
     (d) Incorporate refugee health professionals into local induction mechanisms and/or provide mentoring for them;
     (e) Provide access to library and information services;
     (f) Provide careers advice and counselling, including development plans.

   - Show how their proposals will link in with other schemes (already in existence, or to be developed) to implement the recommendations referred to in (1), above.
   - Have explored other sources of funding;
   - Demonstrate a good track record in the field;
   - Indicate if they will be self-sustaining (or whether additional or continuing funding will be required); and state the anticipated source of further funding;
   - Offer demonstrably good value for money;
   - Demonstrate that funds will be used in a manner that can be financially audited;
   - Indicate if they have the capacity to provide continuing assistance for many refugee health professionals, or just offer ‘one-off’ support.

10. During 2001 and 2002, the Steering Group allocated £1 million of funding. This covered 23 refugee projects providing a variety of services for refugee health
professionals wishing to establish a career in the UK. The Steering Group received over 80 bids for funding in 2001 and 2002.

11. Initially the Steering Group focussed primarily on supporting refugee doctors as there was already a reasonably well established infrastructure in place to do so. The number of projects targeting dentists and nurses increased in 2002. The Steering Group is keen to shift its attention in 2003 to projects focussing on nurses, dentists and the allied health professions. The Steering Group is also working to ensure that projects develop across a representative geographical spread.

12. The services provided include:
   - Language teaching & communication courses
   - The Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) Guide for Refugee Doctors (available from the BMA)
   - Clinical skills courses to prepare refugee doctors for the Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) exam and dentists for the International Qualifying Exam (IQE)
   - Adaptation Courses
   - Experience of the NHS through clinical attachments and work shadowing
   - Mentoring
   - Job clubs, including CV and interview practice

13. The projects have proved very productive in preparing refugee health professionals for the necessary language and clinical skills courses. With only relatively small funding contributions from the Steering Group the projects have been able to make a significant impact, improving teaching methods and preparation techniques. This has resulted in an increase in the overall confidence of refugee students and improved pass rates. It is important to recognise that many of the projects have not been up and running particular long, many set up in the past year. As a result they are only now beginning to yield results in terms of numbers of refugees being supported through exams and attachments. The achievements of some of the 2002/03 funded projects are highlighted below.

   - The project run by North Central London College has enabled 15 doctors to pass PLAB Part 1 and 35 doctors to pass PLAB Part 2. A further 90 doctors have registered online for long distance learning.
   - Supported by a contribution of £24k from the Steering Group, Praxis have provided advice and guidance to over 200 nurses and midwives. 13 nurses are being prepared for the IELTS exam and over 50 midwives recently attended an information and career guidance workshop.
   - The Westminster PCT project has received £36k from the Steering Group and has supported 6 refugee dentists through Parts A and B of the IQE, with a further 19 attending their weekly study sessions in preparation for Part A.
   - £29k of Steering Group funding has supported the RCN project in offering career guidance and support to over 50 refugee nurses with 35 attending workshop events.
   - The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine received £50k and is supporting 4 refugee doctors through PLAB and another 15 with IELTS preparation.
The London Deanery General Practice Department received £41k from the Steering Group and is currently supporting 12 doctors through their clinical experience scheme, covering communication skills, interview skills and CV preparation. The London Dental Deanery is also providing support for refugee dentists working on the IQE.

14. Funding has also helped to establish databases run by the BMA, BDA and Refugee Council, and the Royal College of Nursing. These are voluntary subscription databases allowing each organisation to establish numbers and distribution of refugee health professionals. Individuals who sign up to the respective databases receive information about services available to them through regular newsletters.

15. As of May 2003, there were 849 Refugee Doctors registered on the BMA database, 94 Refugee Dentists registered on the BDA/Refugee Council database and 77 Refugee Nurses registered on the RCN database. The RCN database was only established in January 2003 and its membership is expected to rise significantly.

16. A full list of all the projects funded by the Steering Group is attached at Annex B.

17. The Steering Group decided to review progress of these projects in Autumn 2002 to assess and measure how effective they were in meeting the needs of refugee health professionals and supporting them into a position where they are ready to apply for NHS posts.

18. The audit visits allowed the Steering Group to see first hand how the projects were running and the contribution they were making to the lives of refugees. Supportive and constructive relationships were developed with the project co-ordinators as a result of these visits. These relationships have proved helpful in tackling and resolving any problems that have arisen since. The audit visits also allowed the Steering Group to establish whether their funding contributions were being spent appropriately.

19. Key issues arising from the audit visits included:

Difficulties with asylum applications

20. The Steering Group funding was clearly to go towards the training of refugee health professionals and not towards the training of asylum seekers who were awaiting or appealing a Home Office decision. Many projects reported that asylum-seeking health professionals approached them for help and had to be told that only refugees were allowed to take part in training. Many of the asylum seekers were very frustrated at this, because they had been awaiting a decision for over one, or in some cases two years. They had therefore been in the UK for longer, spoke better English, and knew more about the NHS than many refugees on the courses.

21. The Department of Health is exploring ways of resolving these issues with the Home Office.
Benefits

22. Many projects reported that refugees on their courses were under pressure to take other employment under New Deal rules. However, some job centres appear to accept the fact that the refugee is in training to work in the NHS, and therefore allow them to continue receiving benefits whilst on the course. There is obviously discrepancy in the understanding and application of DWP guidance. Some projects overcame this difficulty by running courses in evenings or at weekends, but this raises other problems such as childcare issues.

23. The Department of Health had a useful meeting and opened a dialogue with the Department of Work and Pensions on these issues.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

24. There was a great sense of frustration about the IELTS examination which overseas doctors, dentists and nurses are required to pass before being able to register and work in the UK. Many refugee health professionals, particularly, nurses, had not previously learned English or trained in an English language environment in their country of origin. All tutors and refugees felt that the appropriateness of IELTS and the scores required of health professionals should be reviewed.

IQE

25. The International Qualifying Exam for dentists, which overseas dentists are required to pass in order to practise fully in the UK has a long waiting list and is extremely expensive. The fees for the IQE are currently £550 for Part A, £650 for Part B and £750 for Part C. The GDC is working to increase the capacity, particularly of the Part C exam, which must be passed within 18 months of Part B.

Employment

26. There were concerns that once refugee health professionals had passed the necessary examinations they were unable to obtain substantive posts in the NHS, although WDCs and Trusts are working hard to remove any potential obstacles.

27. Refugee nurses and midwives find it extremely difficult to gain an adaptation post, which is a requirement of registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Many have experienced delays in the processing of registration applications by the NMC. Refugee Doctors had experienced similar frustrations in securing clinical attachment posts and some had encountered complications with the General Medical Council (GMC) over their registration status, even when they had completed IELTS and PLAB and were supposedly ‘job ready’. Another anomaly was identified, in that the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice (J CPTGP) were not offering advice to refugees until they had successfully gained access to the Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) even though many were in need of J CPTGP advice to help them secure a place on the VTS scheme.
Follow up

28. On all the visits the importance of participant follow up was stressed, as this will allow the Steering Group and DH to assess the outcomes of the funding. For some projects follow up is difficult because of the nature of the service provided. Others endeavour to provide data to DH on the outcomes i.e. numbers passing exams, numbers registered and numbers in NHS posts.

29. Though databases usefully provide accurate figures of those who have chosen to identify themselves, it is very difficult to provide accurate figures on the numbers of refugee health professionals who are now in the country or employed in the NHS.

30. Once refugees have completed training or received the advice they need they often lose contact with the organisations co-ordinating the projects. It is therefore difficult to follow their success in the job market, despite attempts to do so through follow-up questionnaires. The BMA asks the refugee doctors on its database to inform them of any progress they make, such as passing the PLAB examination or gaining a post in the NHS, but doctors rarely keep in touch. Refugees frequently move around the country and are unlikely to identify themselves as a refugee doctor when applying for jobs because of the stigma attached to refugees in the UK. Some refugees have had to flee authorities in their home countries so are understandably reluctant to keep in touch with authorities here.

31. A summary of the audit reports for those projects audited to date is attached at Annex C.

Refugee Showcase Event

32. In November 2002, the Steering Group organised a conference at the Royal College of General Practitioners to showcase the work being taken forward to support refugee health professionals. The event was very well attended and the feedback from attendees was extremely positive. A copy of the programme for the day is attached at Annex D.

33. The event provided a forum for presenting the good work of the existing projects and an opportunity for newly funded projects to network with others in their field. It also provided a good opportunity for Workforce Development Confederations (WDCs) to learn about the work - an important factor as we aim to integrate the good practice and outputs of the various projects into WDC workforce development strategies.
34. Attendees on the day included:

- Representatives from the WDCs
- Representatives from funded refugee projects in 2001 and 2002
- Representatives from the Regulatory Bodies
- DH Senior Officials

35. The day consisted of input from members of the Steering Group and workshops around four key issues for refugee health professionals’ training. Although led by people with experience in these areas, the delegates were encouraged to give their own input. Representatives from the projects brought along with them a presentation/poster promoting their project and its achievements. Help in preparing posters was given to those who had not had experience of presenting their work in this way. All projects therefore left with a tangible product which they could use to present their work to others. The four themed workshops focussed on:

- Preparation techniques for the IELTS examination and issues around training refugees for IELTS.
- Advice and discussion about arranging and structuring clinical attachments for refugee doctors.
- The requirements refugee health professionals must meet to be able to register in the UK, issues surrounding registration and the recognition of qualifications for refugee health professionals.
- Ways of building support and training networks for refugee health professionals to ensure that the work is co-ordinated nation-wide.

36. As a result of the issues raised in the workshops, the regulatory bodies agreed that they needed to examine their procedures and work more closely with each other in this area. Senior representatives from the Nursing & Midwifery Council and Health Professions Council have since attended a Steering Group meeting and strong links have been forged. The General Dental Council have been invited to a future meeting.

37. The event identified a number of areas which were seen to be critical to the successful integration of refugee health professionals into the NHS. These are summarised below:

- Long term funding and co-ordination of advice and support networks – Workforce Development Confederation (WDC) role
- Joint up approach across central government
- On-going career development advice and support to avoid ‘second best’ posts and careers for refugee health professionals
- Multidisciplinary approach to supporting refugee health professionals is more efficient and supports team working

38. The Steering Group intends to organise another Showcase Event in the Autumn of 2003.

Next Stages
39. Funding of £500,000 has been identified for projects in 2003/4. The Steering Group will be calling for bids in mid-May 2003 and intends to decide which projects to support in late June. In deciding the award of funding for 2003/4, the Steering Group will take into account work being done in the Department of Health to develop a consistent approach to the support of all overseas qualified health professionals, built into mainstream workforce development systems and processes wherever possible. The Steering Group will advise the Department about how the special needs of refugees should be addressed within this overall approach. It will continue to support projects which pilot or demonstrate good practice which can be offered to local organisations and in 2003 will encourage, in particular, projects in support of nurses and other health professionals.

40. The Steering Group will consider in detail the progress and outcomes of currently funded projects and advise the Department of Health about how those outcomes may be built into local and national support for refugee health professionals.
Steering Group Terms of Reference and Membership List

Terms of Reference

1. Make recommendations and allocate government funding for projects designed to support refugee health professionals in the UK in preparing and applying for suitable employment in the NHS.

2. Work with voluntary sector, NHS and other bodies to:
   • Support and direct services already provided to refugee health professionals, to maximise their potential;
   • Consider the needs of refugee nurses and other health professionals, making recommendations to ensure that these individuals are able to access co-ordinated services that enable them to take up work within the NHS.
   • Ensure that careers advice and counselling is available for those refugee health professionals who wish to work in the NHS.
   • Work with professional organisations and voluntary sector to ensure that databases are set up to capture numbers, geographic distribution and training career history of refugee health professionals in the UK.

3. In consultation with appropriate bodies, and using in-year funding as provided, put into place mechanisms to ensure:
   • Effective liaison with the Department of Health and the NHS;
   • Assessment of the value for money of resources spent.
   • Financial control;
   • Rigorous tendering and contract placement procedures;
   • Accountability;
   • Regular evaluation of projects, with reviews and progress reports as required; and
   • Targeted bids for future funds.

4. Build on work done in 2001 and 2002 to roll out most successful projects and mainstream them into the NHS.
Membership List

**Chair:**
Professor Dame Lesley Southgate 2001 to present
President of Royal College of General Practitioners

**Members:**
Professor Elizabeth Anionwu 2001 to present
Head of the Mary Seacole Centre for Nursing Practice

Professor Janet Grant 2001 to present
Director of the Open University Centre for Education in Medicine

Ms Marcia Saunders 2001 to present
Chair of North Central London Strategic Health Authority

Dr. Edwin Borman 2001 to present
Chair of the BMA International Committee

Naaz Coker 2001 to April 2003
Chair of the Refugee Council

Professor Andrew Haines 2001 to present
Dean & Professor London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Dr Anthony Mathie 2001 to present
Postgraduate Dean for GP in Mersey

Professor Sam Leinster 2001 to present
Dean, Medical School, University of East Anglia

Lord Bryan Davies of Oldham 2001 to Oct 2002
Former Chair of Further Education Funding Council

Professor Peter Vanezis 2001 to present
Head of Department for Forensic Medicine & Science
University of Glasgow
[Also acts as Scottish representative]

Professor Charles Easmon 2001 to present
Professor of Health Policy, Thames Valley University

Mrs Roswyn Hakesley-Brown Oct 2002 to present
Immediate Past President, Royal College of Nursing

Mrs Prue Kiddie Sept 2002 to present
Department of Health

Mr Stuart Merritt Feb 2002 to present
Department of Health
Mr Jonathan Firth  
Department of Health  
Mar 2003 to present

Miss Martha Swierczynski  
Department of Health  
2001 to Nov 2002
List of Funded Projects March 2001 – March 2003

1. **Kings College London, Institute of Psychiatry [2001 only]**
   Training course and information package for refugee doctors interested in psychiatry. Course of seminars providing knowledge of the NHS, UK culture, examinations, and personal skills (CV writing, interview, time management etc).

   **Contact:**
   Dr Ulrike Schmidt
   Kings College London
   Overseas Office
   Institute of Psychiatry
   Denmark Hill
   London, SE5 8AF
   Tel: 020 7919 3180
   Email: ulrike.schmidt@slam-tr.nhs.uk

2. **North Central London College (NCLC) [2001 & 2002]**
   Training centre that runs Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) preparation courses for refugee doctors. Money has also been provided for distance learning at the (NCLC), so that refugee doctors throughout the country will have access to IELTS and PLAB preparation courses.

   **Contact:**
   Dr Nayeem Azim
   67 Elliott Road
   Hendon
   London, NW4 3EB
   Tel: 020 8201 6093
   Email: nayeemdoc@aol.com
   Website: www.plabisgood4u.com

3. **Barnet College [2001 only]**
   Provides training in General English, Medical English, Managing patients and Pre-PLAB (at the NCLC). Methods include medical lectures, tutorials, and exchanges with the NCLC. Barnet College has also arranged 12 months’ clinical attachments at Barnet Health Authority and Chase Farm Hospital.

   **Contact:**
   Tony Fitzgerald,
   Course Co-ordinator
   Barnet College
   Grahame Park Way
   London, NW9 5RA
   Tel: 020 8266 4133
   Email: tony.fitzgerald@barnet.ac.uk

4. **Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) [2001 only]**
   Produces an information guide for refugee doctors.

   **Guide available from:**
5. **West Midlands Steering Group [2001 & 2002]**
Large collaboration between various Health Authorities and academic centres in the West Midlands providing:
- identification of refugee doctors
- regional information pack
- access to medical libraries
- mentoring with Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service (RETAS) and Warwick University and Birmingham University
- Clinical attachments (pre and post registration)
- IELTS training at Brasshouse Language Centre
- PLAB training at Warwick & Birmingham University
Funded also by West Midlands Workforce Confederations and Warwickshire Health Authority, along with partner organisations.

**Contact:**
Mrs Jo Thanki
Birmingham Specialist Community Health NHS Trust
Salisbury Unit
Moseley Hall Hospital
Moseley
Birmingham, B13 8JL.
Tel: 0121 442 3319
Email: Jo.Thanki@site3.bscht.wmids.nhs.uk

6. **Redbridge & Waltham Forest Health Authority Refugee Health Professionals’ Project [2001 only]**
Communication and clinical skills training for PLAB part 2 at Southwark College, and clinical skills training for PLAB part 2 preparation at Whipps Cross University Hospital.

**Contact:**
Kate Straub
Refugee Health Professionals Project
WLL PCT
3rd Floor Becketts House
2 - 14 Ilford Hill
Ilford
IG1 2QX
Tel. 020 8926 5171
Email: kate.straub@rwfha.nhs.uk

7. **Southwark College [2001 only]**
Tutorials and mentoring to prepare refugee doctors for IELTS.

**Contact:**
Sam McCarter
8. **London Deanery [2001 & 2002]**
Working with 5 participant Trusts to take cohorts of refugee doctors ready to take PLAB. They will provide clinical attachments in trusts for three to six months. Each doctor will also have a tutor / mentor.

**Contact:**
Dr Yong Lock Ong  
Overseas Doctors Office  
London Department of Postgraduate Medical & Dental Education  
20 Guildford Street  
London, WC1N 1DZ  
Tel: 0207 692 3366

9. **Barts & The London (Queen Mary's School of Medicine & Dentistry) [2001 only]**
Build on the existing refugee doctor's project to provide a clinical attachment scheme for refugee doctors.

**Contact:**
Dr Sheila Cheeroth  
Department of General Practice & Primary Care  
Barts & The London  
Queen Mary School of Medicine & Dentistry  
Medical Sciences Building  
Mile End Road  
London, E1 4NS  
Tel: 020 7882 7948  
Email: s.a.cheeroth@qmul.ac.uk

10. **London Deanery General Practice Dept [2002 only]**
Provides a variety of training and support for refugee doctors to help them be successful in obtaining SHO, GPVTS, and GP Registrar posts in the NHS:

- Language development
- Interview skills training
- CV writing support
- IT training
- Create a network of GP practices to organise CPD for refugee doctors
- Arrange clinical experience for refugee doctors in general practice.

**Contact:**
Dr Penny Trafford  
Associate Dean  
The London Deanery Postgraduate Dept of General Practice  
20 Guildford Street  
London WC1n 1DZ  
Tel: 0207 692 3232
11. **Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine [2002 only]**
Creation and implementation of a postgraduate diploma programme in European Medicine, along with language support for IELTS, preparation for PLAB, careers advice, interview skills, and a UK clinical reference.

Contact:
Dr James Bunn
Course Director
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
Pembroke Place
Liverpool L3 5QA
Tel: 0151 705 3205
Email: jegbunn@liv.ac.uk

12. **Refugee Clinicians Project [2002 only]**
Refugee doctors’ training in Bristol and South West, covering all aspects of training including:
- Language skills (for IELTS and PLAB)
- Clinical attachments
- Clinical training (for PLAB)
- Interview and career advice

Contact:
Michelle Griffiths
Refugee Clinicians Project
ESOL Unit
City of Bristol College
Brunel Centre
Ashley-Down Road
Bristol
Tel: 0117 904 5034
Email: Michelle.Griffiths@cityofbristol.ac.uk

13. **West Midlands Refugee Health Professionals’ Project [2002 only]**
Support programme for refugee nurses in the West Midlands.
Services provided include:
- Adaptation courses
- IELTS training
- Mentorship and support
- Professional development & support post-registration with the NMC

Contact:
Mrs Jo Thanki
Birmingham Specialist Community Health NHS Trust
Salisbury Unit
Moseley Hall Hospital
Moseley
Birmingham, B13 8JL.
Tel: 0121 442 3319
Email: Jo.Thanki@site3.bscht.wmids.nhs.uk

14. **Royal College of Nursing [2002 only]**
Set up and manage a voluntary refugee nurses’ database to establish numbers and location of refugees in the UK who are qualified nurses.

**Contact:**
Hugh McCullough  
Deputy Director  
RCN Direct  
Royal College of Nursing  
Copse Walk  
Cardiff Gate Business Park  
Cardiff CF23 8XG  
Tel: 029 2054 6400  
Email: hugh.mccullough@rcn.org.uk

15. **Royal College of Nursing [2002 only]**  
Provides a career guidance programme specifically for refugee nurses in London. Also a career development, training course which teaches about opportunities in UK healthcare, job searching, and career planning. Interview skills practice, CV, personal development planning.

**Contact:**  
Dee Borley  
Director RCN Nurseline  
Royal College of Nursing  
20 Cavendish Square  
London W1G 0RN  
Tel: 0207 647 3880  
Email: dee.borley@rcn.org.uk

16. **British Dental Association [2002 only]**  
Set up and manage a voluntary refugee dentists’ database to establish numbers and location of refugees in the UK who are qualified dentists. Will also provide dentists on the database with free BDA membership which allows them to access the BDA information centre, careers guidance, and the BDA journal. The BDA will also produce a regular newsletter to provide information about training and advice for refugee dentists.

**Contact:**  
Jo Woodcock  
British Dental Association  
64 Wimpole Street  
London W1G 8YS  
Tel: 0207 563 4140  
Email: j.woodcock@bda-dentistry.org.uk

17. **The London Deanery Dept of Postgraduate Dentistry [2002 only]**  
Provides refresher seminar courses for preparation for Part A of the IQE examination. Also provides a Mobile Practical Teaching Unit for preparation for parts B & C of the IQE.

**Contact:**  
Dr Ian Waite  
Department of Postgraduate Dentistry  
The London Deanery  
20 Guilford St  
London WC1N 1DZ  
Tel: 0207 692 3148
18. Westminster PCT [2002 only]
Support for London refugee dentists preparing for the IELTS examination, in the form of a facilitated study group. Will be co-ordinating this training with the London Deanery’s IQE training.

Contact:
Mr Gosaye Fida
Westminster Primary Care Trust
The Medical Centre
7E Woodfield Rd
London W9 3XZ
Tel: 0208 451 8178
Email: gosaye.fida@westminster-pct.nhs.uk

To extend their advice and guidance service for refugee doctors and nurses to allied health professionals. Takes the form of:
• group briefings
• study sessions
• information sessions
• small focus groups
• information days for specific professions
• employment preparation workshops
• personal development sessions

Also advocates the needs of healthcare professionals to the relevant agencies, and produce a teaching pack for refugee nurses.

Contact:
Helen Watts
Praxis Community Projects
Pott St
Bethnal Green
London E2 0EF
Tel: 0207 749 7601
Email: admin@praxis.org.uk

Provides education and support for all refugee health professionals in the North East region through a collaboration of universities, refugee organisations and the NHS in the North East.

Contact:
Joanna Schuder
Programme Manager
Centre for Primary and Community Care Learning
Room H210
Faculty of Health, Social Work and Education
University of Northumbria
Coach Lane Campus East
21. RETAS [2002 only]
Regional mentor training and support.

Contact:
Amit Bhasin
Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service
World University Service UK
14 Dufferin Street
London EC1Y 8PD
Tel: 0207 426 5816
Email: Amit@wusuk.org

22. Praxis [2002 only]
Provides specific IELTS training and career support for refugee nurses.

Contact:
R Vaughan Jones
Praxis Community Projects
Pott St
Bethnal Green
London E2 0EF
Tel: 0207 729 7985
Email: admin@praxis.org.uk
AUDIT VISITS CARRIED OUT TO DATE

NOTE: This information is correct at the time of the audit visit. Subsequent progress will be set out in the next Steering Group report.

Audit Visit 1: King’s College London Institute of Psychiatry 16/9/02
Steering Group Representatives: Martha Swierczynski and Stuart Merritt

Synopsis: Training course and information package for refugee doctors interested in psychiatry. Course of seminars providing knowledge of the NHS, UK culture, examinations, and personal skills (CV writing, interview, time management etc).

Participants: 26 refugee doctors were registered on the course this time, and there was a waiting list of 32 doctors for future seminar series. The course was open to all refugee doctors with an interest in psychiatry, regardless of prior experience or their stage in the UK registration process.

Progress:
- The course covered various aspects of the NHS, mental healthcare, and the practise of psychiatry in the UK, in a series of seminars by guest speakers.
- The refugee doctors were clearly motivated by being on the course.
- The course also provided a good opportunity for the doctors to meet others in similar situations as themselves.
- The second part of the course was to follow in 3 months to allow King’s College to follow up and establish progress.
- The course organisers collect feedback from the participants to use in a course evaluation.

Conclusions: This course was well structured, with experienced staff from King’s College and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, demonstrating a good understanding of the needs of non-UK psychiatrists.

Audit Visit 2: Barts & the London, Queen Mary School of Medicine & Dentistry (19/9/02)
Steering Group Representatives: Martha Swierczynski and Stuart Merritt

Synopsis: Builds on the existing refugee doctor’s project to provide a clinical attachment scheme for refugee doctors.

Participants: There are 23 doctors on the refugee doctors’ course overall. 10 are on the clinical attachment scheme.

Progress:
- The clinical attachment scheme attracted the interest of over 200 doctors. These were short-listed based on set criteria (refugee status, medical experience, passed IELTS etc) and an interview panel finally recruited 10 refugee doctors for the scheme. Other doctors on the programme will progress to the clinical attachment scheme when the assessors feel they are ready.
- The doctors also attend the PLAB 2 and medical IT courses.
- A learning contract for the clinical attachment has been produced, which sets out the expectations of both the refugee and supervisor. 3-months prior to the attachment a needs-
assessment of the refugee doctor will be carried out to ensure they get the most out of the scheme.

- An evaluation will follow the attachment and the supervisors are required to complete an “exit report” for the refugee doctor, which will evaluate their progress. Only on completion of this report will the supervisor receive payment.

**Conclusions:** The Queen Mary Refugee Doctor’s programme appears to be an excellent example of structured, co-ordinated training. The links the programme has with the university provide useful contacts for the refugees. The organisation of the scheme – both financially, and staff-wise – makes for a reliable, strong method of training. Evaluations are expected by summer 2004. This scheme has potential for being a model used nation-wide.

**Audit Visit 3: Redbridge & Waltham Forest Refugee Health Professionals’ Project & Southwark College (26/ 9/ 02)**

**Steering Group Representatives:** Martha Swierczynski and Stuart Merritt

**Synopsis:** Communication and clinical skills training for PLAB part 2 at Southwark College, and clinical skills training for PLAB part 2 preparation at Whipps Cross University Hospital.

**Participants:** 8 refugee doctors all of whom have passed PLAB part 1 and needed help passing part 2.

**Progress:**
- The 2 courses were designed as a complete preparation for PLAB part 2, however, after completion of only the communication course all 8 of the doctors had passed PLAB part 2. Whipps Cross were still keen to continue their part of the training, and so Redbridge RHPP decided to give the 8 doctors the option of using the clinical skills training as an NHS induction. Any spare places on the Whipps Cross course will be filled with PLAB part 2 ready doctors.
- The communication course consisted of 6 weeks’ classroom training, plus one-to-one sessions for role-play. The aim was to change the refugee doctors’ style of communication in the PLAB 2 role-plays from doctor-centred to patient-centred. Many overseas doctors find this difficult to do.
- Many of the refugee doctors had previously learnt all the role-plays of the PLAB 2 exam off-by-heart, which meant the doctors that under the pressure of the timed exam they cracked. However, through this course they learned to listen to the “patient” and think about the best way to respond.
- The 100% success rate speaks for itself.
- The doctors filled out evaluation forms about the course, which were very supportive of the scheme.

**Conclusions:** This cheap, small-scale course in communication has proved to be invaluable to refugee doctors who have difficulty with part 2 of the PLAB examination. Against expectation all doctors passed PLAB 2 after this course.

**Audit Visit 4: Praxis Community Projects (8/ 10/ 02)**

**Steering Group Representatives:** Martha Swierczynski, Stuart Merritt and Elizabeth Anionwu

**Synopsis:** Provides specific IELTS training and career support for refugee nurses.

**Participants:** Praxis deals with an indefinite number of refugee health professionals on a daily basis, providing advice both over the phone and face-to-face.
Progress:
- Praxis had provided advice and guidance to 219 refugee health professionals in 2002 at the time of the audit visit.
- Praxis has developed an advice and guidance pack specifically for advisors working with refugee nurses.
- They have started liaising with North-Central and North-East London WDCs to work with Allied Health Professionals.
- A series of liaisons have begun with the RCN, NMC, BMA, City University, Queen Mary College, NE and NC London WDCs.
- The advocacy role of Praxis was emphasised, and many refugees have been empowered to self-advocate as a result of Praxis’s advice and support.

Conclusions: Praxis has a good reputation for reliable non-discriminatory advice, and persuasive lobbying with other organisations, such as the BMA. Their experience of refugee and overseas nurses is invaluable to the work of the Steering Group. Praxis is also strong in the financial sense, as it has been successful in bidding for funding from a variety of sources, including the Learning and Skills Council.

Audit Visit 5: North East Programme for the Professional Integration of Refugee Health Workers (9/10/02)
Steering Group Representative: Martha Swierczynski

Synopsis: Provides education and support for all refugee health professionals in the North East region through a collaboration of universities, refugee organisations and the NHS in the North East.

Participants: 53 refugee doctors on their database of refugee doctors in the North East. Also have 12 refugee nurses and midwives on their database.

Progress:
- 4 refugee doctors on the programme had obtained jobs at the time of the audit visit.
- Individual mentoring and support is provided through the staff group. House Concern (a support system for doctors funded by the Deanery), provides counselling for the refugee doctors.
- The deanery has provided NHS orientation courses to help prepare for the PLAB examination.
- Doctors are also given access to the library at the University of Newcastle Medical School.
- The scheme has also provided general support on an ad hoc basis for refugee doctors looking for clinical attachments.
- The WDC is on board with this project, and has discussed possible financial support for the future.

Conclusions: This project is strongly linked in with the local postgraduate medical deanery, and has the backing of the WDC.

Audit Visit 6: Southwark College (14/10/02)
Steering Group Representatives: Martha Swierczynski and Stuart Merritt

Synopsis: Tutorials and mentoring to prepare refugee doctors for IELTS.

Participants: 12 refugee doctors, from all over London, who have specific difficulty with the IELTS exam (have taken and failed the exam various times).

Progress:
- Each tutorial has a maximum of 6 students each. As well as the classes, each student is able to book an individual tutorial with the tutor.
- The main technique used is concentrating on the parts of the exam that the students have difficulty with (usually reading and writing) and breaking the bad habits which have caused the doctors to fail in the past.
- The course tuition avoids using medical language and texts, as the tutors feel that many doctors have difficulty with the exam specifically because they concentrate too much on medical terminology, rather than the wider-spanning language needed to pass.
- The success of the course is not yet measurable other than through the doctors’ feedback, as the course has only just begun and the students have not attempted the IELTS exam again. The feedback from the doctors, however, was very positive. The tutor, Sam McCarter, is extremely good at motivating the doctors.

**Conclusions:** This is a good course, which not only provides training for IELTS, but more importantly motivates refugee doctors to succeed.

**Audit Visit 7: Barnet College (14/10/02)**

**Steering Group Representatives:** Martha Swierczynski, Stuart Merritt and Charles Easmon

**Synopsis:** Provides training in General English, Medical English, managing patients and pre-PLAB through medical lectures, tutorials, and exchanges with the PCRD. Barnet College have also arranged 12 month clinical attachments at Barnet Health Authority and Chase Farm Hospital.

**Participants:** 38 refugee doctors were enrolled on the course in September 2001. Some of the DH funding has been carried over to provide services for refugee doctors in 2002-03.

**Progress:**
- Chase Farm Hospital provides clinical attachments for the refugee doctors on the course, and the doctors attend clinical rounds’ lectures and IT courses at the Chase Postgraduate Medical Centre.
- The course had doubled the number of refugee doctors taken on in 2001-02 compared with previous years.
- Barnet aims to help a refugee doctor who scored 4 or more on IELTS at the start of the course improve their score by at least 2 grades (ie. From 4 to 6) at the end of the course. They believe that a doctor who improved by 2 grades throughout the course will then be able to pass IELTS within 2 attempts.
- The results from 2001-02 show that approximately 60% of the doctors improved their score by at least 2 grades. 9 of the 32 who took IELTS scored 7 or above by the end of the course. Barnet college are confident that the remaining doctors will go on to score the 7 required by the GMC in the next 2 attempts at the examination.
- Those doctors who pass IELTS as a result of the Barnet College course are then offered places on PLAB preparation courses at the Postgraduate Centre for Refugee Doctors in Hendon.
- Student feedback on the 2001-02 course was collected through an evaluation questionnaire. More than 75% of the refugee doctors indicated on this that they found the course “very useful”.

**Conclusions:** This course not only prepares refugee doctors for IELTS, but also ensures they have access to medical lectures, IT, and clinical attachments. This course is extremely well organised and supported by the college. The links with the local NHS and PCRD are also strong. It is especially good to see that the refugee doctors are able to access PLAB training after finishing this course, creating a streamlined, complete, training process.
Barnet College are now looking at ways of extending this course to other refugee professionals. This course should be a candidate for a model of training for the first stages of preparation for refugee doctors, and perhaps other health professionals, which could rolled-out at further education colleges throughout the country.

**Audit Visit 8: Postgraduate Centre for Refugee Doctors, Hendon (16/10/02)**

*Steering Group Representatives: Martha Swierczynski, Prue Kiddie and Marcia Saunders*

**Synopsis:** Training centre that runs PLAB preparation courses for refugee doctors. Money has also been provided for distance learning at the PCRD, so that refugee doctors throughout the country will have access to IELTS and PLAB preparation courses.

**Participants:** In total 45 refugee doctors have attended the in-house training, and 85 refugee doctors registered for the distance learning.

**Progress:**
- The in-house training provides clinical practise with special mannequins and equipment bought by the PCRD with our funding. There are taught lectures, as well as practise time.
- There is also a well-stocked library, which contains newspapers, and medical and NHS journals, which the students can access. The classroom contains networked computers, which the students can use to access example PLAB papers and the internet. The centre has also recently purchased a Smart Board, which allows him to give lectures online to students.
- The distance learning is done via the “Plabisgood4u” website ([www.plabisgood4u.com](http://www.plabisgood4u.com)). Anyone can access the public pages, which contain information about the centre and ways of getting help. However, the distance learning pages require refugee doctors to contact Dr Azim and register with him. Before receiving a password, which allows them to access the distance learning resources, the doctors must provide their Home Office documentation which proves they have refugee status, and any relevant exam certificates. Once the doctors have registered with Dr Azim they can access preparation materials for IELTS, PLAB1 and PLAB2 on the website. They can test themselves with sample papers, and get automatic feedback from the computer. There are also over 100 links to medical websites.
- The PCRD keeps a log of when each doctor accessed the site, and what resources they utilised. The administrators study this regularly and contact via email any doctor that has not used the website recently. Dr Azim made it very clear that he does not accept laziness, either in his in-house classes, or on the distance learning.
- In the past, those doctors who are registered for PLAB2 online were then able to attend the centre for in-house PLAB2 preparation, via arrangements made by various deaneries with Dr Azim. There were, of course, limited in-house places, and the travel and accommodation costs for doctors to travel to the centre for one or two weeks can be great. We funded only a limited number of places in 2001-02, and have funded none for the coming year. Dr Azim is seeking WDC and Deanery support to part-fund these.
- The centre is currently developing the capacity to “transmit” his classes via the internet to classrooms of refugee doctors throughout the UK. This will be done via internet links, and video conferencing technology, which will cost each school or centre approximately £10,000 to purchase.
- The pass rate of both the PCRD’s in-house training and distance learning are good, and the centre’s students gave extremely positive feedback about the centre and Dr Azim. Dr Azim is a very positive role model, as someone who came here as a refugee and made his way through the system to become a GP.

**Conclusions:** The PCRD has continued to produce innovative ways of preparing refugee doctors for the NHS, linking in with other courses, such as Barnet College and the deaneries. Dr Azim has some interesting new ideas about how to “send” his training to the whole of the UK, which the Steering Group should certainly investigate further.
Audit Visit 9: West Midlands Refugee Health Professionals’ Project (22/10/02)
Steering Group Representatives: Martha Swierczynski, Stuart Merritt and Tony Mathie

Synopsis: Large collaboration between various Health Authorities and academic centres in the West Midlands. These provide regional information packs, access to medical libraries, mentoring with Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service (RETAS) and Warwick University and Birmingham University, clinical attachments (pre and post registration), IELTS and PLAB training.

Participants: 105 refugee doctors are on the West Mids database, which is linked with the BMA’s Refugee Doctor Database. 32 refugee nurses have been identified, and 19 have been accepted for a career development pathway.

Progress:
- A steering group was originally set up to run this project. It consists of senior figures from medicine, dentistry, the refugee council, and the NHS.
- The health professionals receive preparation for the IELTS exam at the Brass House Language School, which also has an extensive library of English language resources such as videos and books. The BMA has donated books for doctors preparing for IELTS and PLAB.
- Once refugees attending the IELTS course demonstrate their ability to pass the exam they are provided with funding to take the exam. They are permitted a maximum of 2 attempts. A similar arrangement is made for the PLAB and IQE.
- The West Midlands Deanery has organised clinical attachments.
- PLAB 1 training is provided via the PCRD in London, and PLAB 2 training is provided in Birmingham at a course arranged by the steering group.
- The RHPP also provides a 0% interest loan for payment of registration fees once the health professional is eligible for registration. This is to be repaid during the first months of employment.
- Of the 99 refugee doctors active on the database at the time of the audit visit: 32 were preparing for IELTS, 12 had passed IELTS and were preparing for PLAB1, 4 had passed PLAB1 and were preparing for PLAB2, 3 were seeking employment, and 20 were in employment as a doctor - the majority in substantive training posts.

Conclusions: This project has an admirable organisational structure, which sets a high standard for others to follow. The inclusion of a financial sub-group ensures that the spending is monitored and managed. The pan-professional approach has been strengthened in 2002-03 by a successful bid to DH for funding to support refugee nurses.
REFUGEE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS’ STEERING GROUP
PROJECT SHOWCASE 2002

Wednesday 6 November 2002
Royal College of General Practitioners

DRAFT PROGRAMME

2pm Welcome by Professor Dame Lesley Southgate and Professor Elizabeth Anionwu

2.15 Keynote speech – John Hutton, Minister for Health (tbc)

2.30 Jo Thanki, West Midlands Refugee Health Professionals’ Project

2.45 Dr Nayeem Azim, Postgraduate Centre for Refugee Doctors

3pm Tea and opportunity to view poster display of projects funded during 2001

4pm Workshop Session 1

4.45pm Workshop Session 2
(Participants will be invited to sign up to two out of the four workshops on the day)

Workshops (see overleaf for description):

A International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
   Tony Fitzgerald, Barnet College and Sam McCarter, Southwark College

B Clinical attachments
   Sheila Cheeroth, Queen Mary Project

C Registration & Recognition of Qualifications
   Cathy Lee, General Medical Council and representatives from the other Health Professionals’ Regulatory bodies (tbc)

D Networking
   David Chappel and Joanna Schuder, North East Project

5.30pm Summary of the day and closing thought – Dr Edwin Borman / Marcia Saunders

6pm Vegetarian finger buffet plus tea, coffee and soft drinks.
WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshops is to share ideas and experiences around four key issues for refugee health professionals’ training. Although led by people with experience in these areas, the delegates will be encouraged to give their own input into the workshops.

A. IELTS

Tony Fitzgerald, Barnet College and Sam McCarter, Southwark College

Scoring highly on the International English Language Testing System examination is a prerequisite for registration in the UK for most refugee health professionals. The workshop will concentrate on preparation techniques for the International English Language Testing System examination, and allow open discussion about issues around training refugees for IELTS.

B. CLINICAL ATTACHMENTS

Sheila Cheeroth, Queen Mary Project

Advice and discussion about arranging and structuring clinical attachments for refugee doctors.

C. REGISTRATION AND RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Cathy Lee, General Medical Council and other regulatory representatives

Information from the regulatory bodies on the requirements refugee health professionals must meet to be able to register in the UK, plus open forum discussion on issues surrounding registration and the recognition of qualifications for refugee health professionals.

D. NETWORKING

David Chappel and Joanna Schuder, North East Project

Open forum discussion about ways of building support and training networks for refugee health professionals, to ensure that the work is co-ordinated nationwide. Also covers issues around other sources of funding for refugee health professionals’ initiatives.