

South Africa-Cuban doctor training recognised by Imperial College, London

MEC Dr. Dhlomo has been invited to the United Kingdom by the Global Health and Development Institute for Global Health Innovation- Imperial College London to attend a conference on Human Resources for Health and Economic Growth. The MEC will be presenting the South Africa Cuba Doctors program.

Human Resources for Health and Economic Growth: Learning from the Cuban Experience in Medical Education 24-25 April 2017 Imperial College London

Background

Health inequalities continue to exist within and between countries despite advances in training of health professionals and an increased emphasis of evidence-based health care. Maldistribution of health professionals and services fuels health inequalities and health systems are increasingly failing to meet the needs of populations in low, middle and high income countries. These issues have been detailed by an expert group.

The Sustainable Development Goals set out an ambitious agenda and the related health workforce needs are enormous, with an estimated 18 million additional qualified health professionals needed globally to deliver basic health services. The World Health Organization, in response to a request by its Member States, has developed a Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030, which examines the strategic opportunities and health workforce requirements in the decades to come. This global strategy aims to "accelerate progress towards universal health coverage and the UN Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring equitable access to health workers within strengthened health systems" 2 and was ratified by the World Health Assembly in May 2016.

The UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health (APPG-GH) has played a key role in human resources for health. In 2015 the APPG-GH hosted a meeting on the role of Cuba in supporting health professionals training in South Africa. Cuba trains huge numbers of doctors for many countries in the world, USA included. The unique aspects of Cuban medical education, which focuses heavily on community health, community diagnosis and primary care – are all highly relevant to current thinking about transformation of health professional training to achieve universal health coverage.

Early in 2016 the APPG-GH hosted a panel discussion about the future direction of the global health workforce with perspectives from key leaders in public health: Jim Campbell (Executive Director, Global Health Workforce Alliance and Director of the Health Workforce Department, WHO), Francesca Colombo (Head of the OECD Health Division), Richard Horton (Editor-in-Chief of the Lancet), and Duncan Selbie (Chief Executive of Public Health). Richard Horton launched the Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth³ at this meeting. The Commission is chaired by Presidents Zuma and Hollande, and aims to build the evidence base, strengthen policy dialogue across multiple sectors, and catalyse actions to guide the creation of new jobs and investment in health and social sector employment. A report is expected in September 2016.

The APPG-GH has also commissioned a report that shows that the UK plays a leading role in health globally – in research and education, public health, healthcare, life sciences, policy making, international development, philanthropy and the NGO sector, and that benefits from this work flow into the NHS. The Republic of South Africa is currently training more than 2000 of its medical students in Cuba – a brave experiment in achieving transformations in its health services which is being studied by a DfID funded policy research project conducted by Imperial College

London Institute for Global Health Innovation, Human Sciences Research Council South Africa, Public Health England and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

Purpose of the meeting.

- Opportunity to discuss how to link UK primary health care know how, with Cuban know how, to create different types of partnerships for improving health systems globally.
- Highlight the lessons of the Cuban approach for medical education for South Africa, UK and elsewhere.
- Report research findings from the exploration of the role of Cuban medical training for South Africa.
- Explore the policy levers and implications of transforming health professionals training.

The Republic of South Africa is currently training more than 2000 of its medical students in Cuba. A large number of these students come from KwaZulu-Natal. – Over 728 Doctors from KwaZulu-Natal who are currently training in Cuba, in 2018 half of those will be returning to South Africa to begin their doctors internships. These students will be placed across the length and breadth of KwaZulu-Natal. A majority of them will be placed at rural communities once their internship has been complete.

The Department of Health KZN would like to inform the member of the media that MEC Dr Dhlomo is available for telephonic and Skype interviews while in the U.K