



British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP

PRESS RELEASE

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BAPIO calls for a full independent review of the system of medical workforce planning and the role of IMGs in the NHS.

Reacting to a report expected to be published in the BMJ, linking performance on the PLAB exams with both MRCP and MRCGP performance, the BAPIO leaders have expressed their dismay.

Dr Ramesh Mehta, the President of BAPIO commented, “We must drive standards up, but we need objective evidence and fair processes. We have asked the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC) to work with us and start such a review. We may be Indian origin but we are foremost NHS doctors and want the NHS to be the best; this blame game is not helpful”.

Professor Rajan Madhok, Chairman of BAPIO said, “We are deeply disturbed with the commissioning of the study, the fundamental premise of the researchers and the many grossly misleading assumptions proffered as conclusions.”

The 2003 PLAB review came to the right conclusion that the standard of test should be that of doctors completing the end of FY1 yet failed to design and implement a test that will be common to UK FY1 doctors and IMGs. A common test is the only valid method that can provide equivalence. UK graduates never take PLAB or IELTS. Given this scenario, comparisons are essentially impossible and hence meaningless. To use statistics in such a scenario means that the researchers and their commissioners have made a singular error in basic statistical science. In the USA all doctors have to pass the USMLE before they can be registered and practice as doctors irrespective of whether they are American graduates or International Graduates.

At best this is an ill-advised statistical conclusion and at worst a post-hoc defence of incomparable practices that helps continue prejudices and biases against the BME population who constitute approximately 18% of the population of UK.

Dr Satheesh Mathew, Vice-President of BAPIO reacted by saying that they found it extremely objectionable to call any doctor qualifying from UK as the 'the worst UK graduate'. “The use of such phrases does not reassure the public in our increasingly litigious society” He added, “These reviews have done a great disservice to the cause of equality and justice by coming to these retrograde conclusions based on flawed comparators”.

The conclusions in both of these papers refers to the implications on workforce as a result of raising PLAB pass levels in the so called less popular specialties which they state have depended on IMGs. This vindicates the view that we hold that IMGs are treated differently with the intention of using IMGs as workforce fodder rather than with the intention of enriching this country with well-trained doctors. More worryingly talking about allowing doctors who do not meet standards to work in the UK on the basis of workforce issues is a slap on the face of the patient safety agenda that BAPIO takes very seriously

In our recent Judicial Review in MRCGP examination assessment, the Hon Judge noted that the institutions must change its assessment process after acknowledging that ethnic minority medical graduates were put at a disadvantage by the current assessment.

BAPIO remains concerned about the independence of these reports and recommend that such studies would be better served if commissioned to 'independent' party to avoid any potential for bias and conflict of interest.

We share our thoughts with the comments of the High court Judge Hon Mr Mitting, "Endless amount of research has been commissioned to date on some of the most critical issues with no solutions or action points, it has taken a court case to effect action".

It is time to grasp the issue firmly and act firmly to achieve a fairer NHS. These efforts to portray persons who have potentially been discriminated against as weak performers are very disingenuous.

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ABOUT BAPIO

British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin is a national voluntary organisation. Since its formal launch by the then Minister for Health in 1998 the Association has expanded its presence in all the regions of the Britain, Including Scotland and Wales. BAPIO also established a unique project – Medical Defence Shield to support doctors by providing advice and professional support.

In 2006 BAPIO successfully made a Judicial challenge against the Department of Health and the Home Office in relation to their attempt to introduce new immigration rules, wining in the House of Lords.

In its recent JR against RCGP, the Honourable judge Mr Mitting while delivering his judgement said the claim had been brought in good faith and in the public interest, expressing hope that it would lead to progress. "The bringing of this claim is likely, in the end, to bring something of benefit to the medical profession," he said and concluded by describing the outcome for Bapio as "if not a legal victory then a moral success".