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Dwyer, James. (2007, September- October). **What's Wrong with the Global Migration of Health Care Professionals? Individual Rights and International Justice.** *Hastings Center Report*, 37(5), 36- 43.

## Summary

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This article explores the ethical aspects of global medical migration, questioning the right of health care professionals to emigrate, exploring questions of and the relationship between social and international justice, and considering strategies to respond to the issues at hand.

Dwyer argues that while people have a right to emigrate, given the public investment in the training and education of health professionals, this right should be balanced with their responsibility to society. In addition to respecting rights and fostering responsibilities, a just society helps people meet basic needs and gives priority to the least advantaged. Using this definition of social justice, Dwyer explores how destination countries use immigrant health professionals to serve underserved populations and to address overall staffing shortages. While these efforts are congruent with the goals of social justice in terms of meeting people's basic needs and giving priority to the most disadvantaged, he argues that destination countries should consider alternate ways of responding to the perceived shortages and to critically examine the assumptions underlying this perception of need.

Dwyer outlines some strategies for responding to the issue of medical migration:

- First, he suggests that source countries consider requiring social commitments from publicly educated professionals.
- Second, these countries could focus more resources on training community health workers, who require local knowledge, language and trust in order to be effective. Because these skills are not easily transferable, doing so will produce professionals who are both less likely to emigrate and who can promote basic health and reduce health disparities within source countries.
- Third, destination countries could address the maldistribution of their domestically-trained health care professionals, promote societal conditions that foster population health, and consider how to set fair limits and conditions on the expansion of medical consumption.
- Finally, destination countries could enter into agreements with developing countries to create international norms and institutions that promote efforts to achieve social justice. Dwyer concludes by asserting that these suggested strategies all require taking a long-term view of human resources, developing political will, and taking ethics concerns more seriously.

*The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, the  
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