

Editorial**Expatriation of Nepalese Doctors: Is it an Alarming Issue?****Sahadeb Prasad Dhungana**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jonmc.v13i2.74394>**Abstract**

Nepal, a country nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, is grappling with a troubling phenomenon—the increasing expatriation of its medical doctors. This trend, while not unique to Nepal, raises significant concerns about the situation of the nation's healthcare system and its ability to provide equitable services to its citizens. Is this migration merely a symptom of global mobility, or is it an alarming issue demanding immediate attention?

Keywords: *Health care professionals, Nepal, Out-migration***The Magnitude of the Problem**

Nepal produces hundreds of medical graduates annually, many of whom opt to leave the country in pursuit of better opportunities abroad. The majority of Nepalese doctors seek advanced training, higher salaries, and improved working conditions in countries like the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, India and Maldives [1].

This outward flow of talent often referred to as "brain drain" results in a significant deficit of skilled professionals within Nepal [2]. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a minimum of 1 per 1,000 people to achieve adequate healthcare coverage [3]. Nepal's ratio, however, falls far below this benchmark, particularly in rural areas (1 doctor per 150,000 people) where healthcare access is already limited. Of the more than 1000 doctors produced in Nepal each year, between 40 and 50% leave the country soon after graduation in search of


greener pastures [4].

From 2020 to 2023, the number of medical graduates pursuing careers abroad increased nearly 1.5 times from 869 to 2,318, indicating a rising demand for good standing Certificates [5].

Root Causes of Expatriation

Several push and pull factors contribute to this trend [6]:

- Poor Working Conditions:** Nepalese healthcare facilities often suffer from inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and high patient loads, making the work environment challenging for doctors.
- Economic Disparities:** Low salaries and limited financial incentives in Nepal make opportunities abroad more attractive.
- Lack of Career Growth:** Advanced training and specialization opportunities are scarce in Nepal, compelling many doctors to seek further education overseas.

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4. Political Instability: Frequent political changes and lack of consistent healthcare policies have created uncertainty in the medical profession.

Implications for Nepal

The consequences of this trend are far-reaching. Rural areas, which already face significant healthcare access challenges, are disproportionately affected. The exodus of skilled doctors exacerbates the urban-rural healthcare divide, leaving vulnerable populations without adequate medical care.

Moreover, the financial investment in medical education often subsidized by the government or supported by families yields diminishing returns when graduates leave the country. This loss not only affects healthcare service delivery but also undermines efforts to strengthen Nepal's healthcare system.

Addressing the Crisis

Reversing this trend requires a multi-pronged approach:

- 1. Improving Working Conditions:** Upgrading healthcare infrastructure and providing necessary resources can enhance the work environment for doctors.
- 2. Incentivizing Rural Service:** Offering financial and professional incentives for doctors working in underserved areas can help retain talent.
- 3. Strengthening Medical Education:** Expanding opportunities for advanced training and specialization within Nepal can reduce the need for doctors to seek education abroad.
- 4. Engaging the Diaspora:** Encouraging expatriate doctors to contribute through short-term medical missions, telemedicine, or knowledge-sharing initiatives can mitigate the impact of brain drain.

5. Policy Reforms: Consistent and strategic healthcare policies, including competitive salaries and career development plans, are crucial for retaining medical professionals.

Conclusion

The expatriation of Nepalese doctors is indeed alarming. It poses a serious threat to the nation's healthcare system, particularly for the underserved populations in rural areas. While the allure of opportunities abroad is undeniable, Nepal must focus on creating an environment that values and retains its medical talent. Collaborative efforts from the government, healthcare institutions, and the global Nepalese medical community are essential to address this crisis and ensure equitable healthcare for all.

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