

How IMGs have changed the face of American medicine

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Monday marked the start of the AMA's IMG Recognition Week, a time to take special note of the tremendous contributions that international medical graduates (IMGs) make to U.S. medicine, its physician workforce and to patient care.

Here are some key facts that you should know about how IMGs are remaking American health care—as demonstrated by this collection of information obtained from Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), AMA, Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, and the Association of American Medical Colleges.

25% of licensed U.S. doctors are IMGs. That share has grown by half a percentage point since 2010, but what the figure means in raw terms is even more impressive.

The number of IMGs in practice has grown by nearly 18% since 2010. That figure is bigger than the 15% rise in U.S. medical graduates over that same time period.

The largest number of licensed IMGs have graduated from schools in India (23%)—per the FSMB census—followed by the Caribbean (18%), Pakistan (6%), the Philippines (6%) and Mexico (5%).

More than 45,000 IMGs practice internal medicine, making it the most populated specialty among the segment.

By share of the workforce, **IMGs have the largest presence in geriatric medicine**, where they make up more than half of the active physician population.

IMG Match participation rose by more than 1,100 applicants in the 2020–2021 Match cycle. The total number of IMGs who matched (7,508) was an increase of 132 over the prior year.

Led by the policy work of the AMA International Medical Graduates Section (AMA-IMGS), the

Association strongly advocates on vital issues such as:

- | Expansion of the J-1 visa waiver program to more than 30 slots per state.
- | Immigration and green-card delays.
- | State licensure parity.
- | Discrimination.
- | Racial and ethnic disparities.
- | GME funding for more residency positions.

Among the major policy developments of the past year for IMGs is the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act. The AMA is supporting bipartisan federal legislation that creates practice opportunities for IMGs as they provide care for underserved communities.

The AMA also moved to make the credentialing process less cumbersome for IMGs. The policy was motivated by the fact that a significant proportion of IMGs practice in underserved areas. That reality, combined with a looming physician shortage, creates a need to cut barriers to entry for foreign-trained physicians.

Read about AMA-IMGS policy and advocacy efforts, including an IMG physician toolkit to help navigate the process of practicing medicine in the U.S.