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Poland loses record numbers of doctors to the UK

Letter: Poland is losing its doctors BMJ Volume 331, p 235

Poland is losing significant numbers of its doctors to the UK and other Western nations of the European Union, says a letter in this week's BMJ.

Following accession to the EU, nearly 500 Polish doctors registered with the UK's General Medical Council in one year - 30 times as many as in the previous year. The Scandinavian countries are also a popular destination for doctors leaving Poland, say the authors.

Despite the arrival of democracy, current conditions for doctors in Poland drive them to seek work in the West, argue the authors. Salaries are so low that many doctors work in several places or decide to work as sales reps for the pharmaceutical industry.

The career structure also poses problems, effectively preventing many doctors from specialising - leaving them no choice but to leave Poland if they want to gain expertise in a chosen area. The lack of new diagnostic technologies and treatments also spurs doctors to seek opportunities for developing their skills elsewhere.

The healthcare systems of former communist countries may have changed, but the working conditions of Poland's doctors have not improved, conclude the authors.

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