RAPAR

*Working Together To Achieve Equal Human Rights*

PRESS RELEASE

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**PATIENTS DESERVE THE CHANCE TO BE TREATED -**

**DOCTORS SHOULD BE ABLE TO TREAT THEM**

***English language tests preventing medical professionals from practising in the UK as NHS struggles to survive***

***Launch of research at 12 noon on Wednesday 16th May at Rusholme Health Centre, Walmer Street, Manchester, M14 5NP***

Hundreds of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and laboratory technicians are being prevented from working in a struggling NHS because of the current English language tests set by the General Medical Council (GMC) and other professional bodies.

A campaign launched through RAPAR - *Medical Professionals in the UK Seeking Registration* **-** is growing by the day with over 500 medical professionals already signed up to it, There is also increasing support from the wider general public and a 38 Degrees Petition has been put together <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/medical-professionals-in-the-uk-seeking-registration-2>

One of the campaign founders, Dr Hiba Alzamzamy, spoke at a national demonstration in support of the NHS last month. Research about the English language tests put together by her campaign group will be launched at Rusholme Health Centre in Manchester on May 16th - the day before an NHS Skills, Retention and Recruitment conference in the city.

The campaign is backed by Dr Aneez Esmail, Professor of General Practice at the University of Manchester's Medical School, who says:” At a time when the NHS is really desperate for extra staff it is strange that there is a failure to recognise the contribution that refugees and other medical professionals from outside the UK can make.

“”These are highly skilled professionals and we need to help them to start their lives again – this will in turn help the NHS at a time of great need.”

The campaign is calling on the GMC and other bodies to return to more realistic and appropriate English language tests. Doctors who passed the previous language test are currently working successfully in the NHS. But now highly qualified doctors – many of whom have been forced to flee their home countries for humanitarian reasons – are being stopped from using their skills and expertise.

Four years ago, the GMC raised its already high score for doctors in the International English Language Examination Testing System (IELTS) even further and they are now considering whether to raise it yet again.. The exam tests general knowledge of English language and includes topics such as archaeology, jam making and current affairs – much of it irrelevant to the kind of terminology used by medical professionals. In response to concerns, the GMC has now introduced an Occupational English Test (OET) in addition to the IELTS.

There is little information about the new OET which originates from Australia and is almost triple the cost of the IELTS. The new test is still in its early stages in the UK and it is not yet known if it will be fit for purpose. In addition, there is still the problem of the unrealistically high barrier of the IELTS.

Nurses, dentists, pharmacists and other medical professionals are having similar problems with the levels being set by their own professional councils for the English language tests.

Dr Alzamzamy explains: “Most of the professionals in our campaign have studied and gained their qualifications overseas on courses which have been delivered primarily in English. We are highly skilled people who want to help patients at a time when the NHS is in crisis. We acknowledge that communication is an essential element in securing patients' safety but the new test level is not a bar to ensure safety, it is a barrier preventing us from practising our profession.

“The English language test level now set by the GMC is unrealistic and very demoralising. Years of study and sheer hard work are going to waste.”

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