**PATIENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED -**

**DOCTORS SHOULD BE ABLE TO TREAT THEM**

* ***New research shows that unrealistic English language tests are preventing hundreds of medical professionals from practising in the UK as the NHS struggles to survive***
* ***Research will be launched in Manchester on May 16th - the day before an NHS recruitment and retention conference takes place in the city***

Next Wednesday, newly launched research will show that the current unrealistic English language test levels for medical professionals are stopping hundreds of skilled people from working in the NHS.

The research will be launched at a press conference to be held at 2pm at the Robert Darbishire Practice, Rusholme Health Centre, Walmer Street, Manchester M14 5NP. Findings from the research will be available and a question and answer session will follow. The launch comes the day before an NHS Skills, Recruitment and Retention conference in the city.

The research will show that doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and laboratory technicians are being prevented from working in a struggling NHS because of the English language test levels set by the General Medical Council (GMC) and other professional bodies.

A campaign against the current levels of testing has been launched through RAPAR. *Medical Professionals in the UK Seeking Registration*is growing by the day with over 500 medical professionals already signed up. Support for the campaign is increasing after a 38 Degrees Petition was launched.

[https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/medical-professionals-in-the-uk-seeking-registration-2](https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/medical-professionals-in-the-uk-seeking-registration-2" \t "_blank)

One of the campaign founders, Dr Hiba Alzamzamy, has already raised the issue at a national demonstration in support of the NHS.

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.”

North Manchester GP Dr Siema Iqbal adds: “"The NHS is in crisis with an ongoing and worsening staffing shortage. Surely it makes sense to ensure that barriers doctors are facing to working in the NHS are overcome.

“Whether that is through increasing the visas available to overseas doctors or scrapping outdated, irrelevant, unrealistic language tests that are preventing doctors from working in the UK, action needs to be taken before more patients are put at risk because of the staffing crisis."

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 will not 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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