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Accident and emergency? the impacts of brexit in the context of emergency medicine in the UK

Laura Alice Rose Alger

King's College London, UK

Statement of the Problem: The impact that Brexit will have on the NHS is a contentious issue which has been at the forefront of the debate for some time. Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments are already considerably understaffed and therefore are likely to be significantly affected. By examining the potential consequences and reflecting on how they may translate into reality, action can be taken to preserve the safe and effective provision of emergency medical services.

Methodology: An informal literature search of relevant publications pertaining to the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union was performed. This was collated with governmental and NHS guidance to explore the potential impacts on UK emergency medical services.

Findings: 5.6% of all NHS staff and 9.7% of doctors originate from Europe and GMC research shows that

60.8% of these doctors have considered leaving the NHS due to Brexit. A 2017 Royal College of Emergency Medicine report states the need to employ a further 2,200 emergency medicine consultants in such an event. Given the current financial standing of the NHS, this seems unfeasible, especially combined with declining medical school applications from students with home fee status.

Conclusion & Significance: It is vital that the socio-economic implications of Brexit on healthcare are not ignored and that steps are taken to ensure that certain groups are not discriminated against, both as NHS workers and patients. Efforts to retain and recruit emergency medics must be made a priority if the NHS is to continue to provide high-quality emergency care.

laura.alger95@gmail.com