

RE-IMAGINING HEALTHCARE DELIVERY IN THE 21st CENTURY WITH EMPATHY AS CENTRAL TO HUMANITY

Cindy Sinclair¹ and Pius Gitonga Gervasioh²

¹University of Toronto, Canada

²University of Nairobi, Kenya

Empathy is a cognitive-affective response to the human need for affection. It is a universal value accepted across human diversity. Patients seek medical attention because they are sick and vulnerable. Patients expect a level of commitment, compassion, communication for empowerment and compassionate empathy from their physicians and caregivers. This paper argues that Canada has effectively embraced empathy in the welcoming and non-discriminatory healthcare policy. Canada attracts over 250,000 of the world's healthiest and brightest immigrants and more than 25,000 refugees and others on humanitarian and compassionate grounds each year. Almost 50% of newcomers come from developing countries. Additionally, the Canadian medical profession enjoys the world-renown status as being at the forefront of medical education and training. Canada has one of the most advanced government-funded systems with equal access to healthcare for everyone. Research shows that within five years of arrival in Canada, newcomers start to experience declined health. The doctor shortage continues to leave almost five million people in Canada with no access to family doctors and timely care while the assumption that foreign born educated immigrant medical doctors are not the right fit to fill the doctor-shortage gap. There is a growing interest by medical leaders in the profession to ensure accessible care to all patients notwithstanding their cultural, religious or linguistic diversity, even if this means translating services in different languages and hiring interpreters to assist with patient-doctor communication. With the growing disruptions in the world, Canada's open doors to newcomers who are seeking better economic, social and safety conditions, there is an urgent need to re-imagine better ways to capitalize on foreign medical talents to care for the expanded diverse patient population. We aim to discuss some possibilities for healthcare training with empathy as central to humanity in the 21st century.

Biography

Cindy Sinclair has received her PhD in Social Justice Education, MEd in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education and BA in History and Fine Art History from the University of Toronto. She has more than 20 year's administrative and postgraduate medical education experience. Her research focuses on immigrant medical doctors (IMDs) who are not selected for retraining programs towards medical recertification. She co-founded the Immigrant Medical Doctors Forum to further explore integration of IMDs in the Canadian medical system.

c.sinclair@utoronto.ca