

Global Borders

Factors Affecting the Health of
International Students Studying in the

UK

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The Study

- Considerable numbers of students undertaking nurse education in the UK are international students from Zimbabwe
- The study aimed to listen to their narratives in order to understand their experiences and to make suggestions for improving their educational management



Methods

- Nine pre-registration nursing students and one qualified nurse from Zimbabwe participated in life-history interviews
- The interviews covered:
 - *experiences in Zimbabwe leading to migration to the UK
 - *accounts of arriving in the UK
 - *challenges experienced in starting the course
 - *working in health care settings as placements
 - *becoming reconciled to life in the UK



Findings

Factors prompting migration to the UK are reported to include:

- The emphasis on education as a means of social mobility
- The economic crisis
- The disruption of family ties by the HIV epidemic



- Educational courses for nursing are the means to prevent their aspirations for professional occupation floundering on current economic and political instability in Zimbabwe, rather than a positive career choice
- The reliance of the NHS on internationally-recruited students to cover shortfalls in labour in the UK contributes to this process.



HIV and Aids

- HIV prevalence in the adult population of Zimbabwe is estimated to be 25% (Chifunyise, Benoy, and Mukiibi, 2002)
- Rising HIV infection rates in the UK has been linked to the rising numbers of African immigrants (Carter, 2003)
- It is likely that at least some of the Zimbabwean students will be HIV positive

- The duration of clinical latency following primary HIV infection varies widely among individuals depending on many factors including :
 - * host resistance
 - * nutritional deficiency
 - * access to anti-retroviral drugs and new treatment strategies



- HIV positive students who experience financial difficulty are more likely to suffer a poor nutritional intake
- HIV positive students with compromised nutritional status may be at risk from opportunistic infections encountered in clinical placements
- “Let no one doubt that proper nutrition is the best frontline drug for AIDS” (Nemapare, 2002)



- Current UK policy advocates non-compulsory testing of immigrants for HIV (Carter, 2003)
- Students requesting support from occupational health services do so in strict confidence



Implications and Recommendations

- The University - must ensure policies for recruitment, selection and admission take account of the particular difficulties faced by Zimbabwean students
- Educational leaders - must work alongside occupational health services in order to advise Zimbabwean students on matters of personal health and safety
- Zimbabwean Students - must recognise the value of peer support and develop networks to facilitate this
- The UK Government - must develop planned recruitment programmes that do not involve vulnerable countries, while recognising the valuable contribution Zimbabwean nursing students make to the provision of health care in the UK

