

HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN, BERMUDA, 2017



HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN, BERMUDA 2018-2020

Assuring healthy people and healthy communities

ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the strategic objectives and necessary lines of action to assure that Bermuda has the appropriate human resources for health to meet 21st century needs. This is a companion document to Bermuda Health Workforce, 2017.

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Foreword

This strategic plan is the companion document to the *Bermuda Health Workforce, 2017* document. The latter is a situation analysis of the current health workforce in Bermuda. It contains an overview of the health system and the results of multi-disciplinary consultations with healthcare professionals. These occurred between spring 2016 and fall 2017. The consultations were facilitated by the Chief Medical Officer and advisors from the Pan American Health Organization. Multiple disciplines contributed to the situation analysis, and the consultations resulted in recommendations to improve health workforce planning.

Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan, Bermuda 2018-2020 contains a summary of the health workforce situation analysis and the recommendations, presented as a strategic plan. It is anticipated that future stakeholder consultations will result in further planning and implementation of an operational plan to assure optimal human resource for health in Bermuda.

Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan, Bermuda 2018-2020

The challenges facing Bermuda in the 21st Century are multiple and deep-rooted. As with the rest of the world, including developed countries, there are complex social, economic, political, cultural and environmental changes that are impacting every aspect of life. The health system, in particular, is being impacted by multiple factors. Population health, wellbeing and prosperity are undergoing change.

The health of Bermudians is impacted by all these factors in a variety of ways. One challenge to the health of Bermudians is the provision of appropriate human resources to address the specific health requirements of the 21st Century. Bermuda is hardly unique in its struggle to provide human resources for health; all countries face this ongoing challenge, and each must analyse its needs and identify pathways to addressing them. This is the objective of this document, to present Bermuda's Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan.

The "Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030", states that health workforce planning is necessary in order to "accelerate progress towards universal health coverage and the UN Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring equitable access to health workers within strengthened health systems". The overall goal is to "improve health, social and economic development outcomes by ensuring universal availability, accessibility, acceptability, coverage and quality of the health workforce..."

The "Bermuda Health Strategy" and the "Health Action Plan 2014-2019" both include health workforce planning as a strategic priority for the health system. The Health Strategy alludes to assessing the island's human resources for health by noting the requirement to "meet long-term healthcare needs"¹; and the Action Plan explicitly states this as an objective under Human Resource Development, Professionals, priority item 11.²

In 2016, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer undertook to conduct a multi-sectorial consultation on health workforce planning, with the support and guidance of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Data were collected through key informant interviews, focus groups, several meetings with a core group of health stakeholders, a desk review of relevant literature (published and unpublished) and stakeholder workshops held in July and November 2016 and September 2017.

Through this process, a picture was created of the current health workforce composition and consensus conclusions were drawn regarding the extent to which the current health workforce meets

¹ Bermuda Health Strategy, Priorities for Bermuda's Health System Reform, 2014-2019, Ministry of Health, Seniors and Environment, Government of Bermuda, Goal 7, p. 4

² Bermuda Health Action Plan, 2014-2019, Ministry of Health, Seniors and Environment, Government of Bermuda, p. 7

the community's health needs. Additionally, information was reviewed on Bermuda's population health. The 2014 "STEPS to a Well Bermuda" survey results were used, along with comparisons to the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Health in Review 2017".

Both sources of information paint a picture of an island community increasingly burdened by poorly managed chronic preventable diseases. The chronic disease risk prevalence foreshadows a worsening situation over the next decades; one that is also financially unsustainable. The future clearly requires a health workforce that is highly skilled, capable of effective health promotion, health education and complex chronic disease management.

Several categories of healthcare professionals were evaluated in terms of composition, perceived adequacy of numbers, skills mix and qualifications. Feedback was invited from professionals in nursing, medicine, dentistry, psychology, pharmacy, allied health, and health education. Participation was broad and included workers from public and private settings, the acute care hospital and the Bermuda Health Council, the latter two quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (QUANGOs). The results of the multi-disciplinary feedback can be found in the Appendix of the *Bermuda Health Workforce, 2017* document, which is the current situation analysis. A brief summary is shared below of feedback highlights from various professions.

Nursing professionals hail from a vast geographic distribution and reflect the global diversity of the entire health workforce in Bermuda. Currently only 28% of nursing professionals are Bermudian, leaving the island vulnerable to global social, economic and political circumstances, and dependent on local immigration policy and procedures. As a result, the profession of nursing is considered a vulnerable category of healthcare professionals in Bermuda. This, of course, mirrors the worldwide picture of a chronic nursing shortage. Efforts to increase Bermudian interest in the field are underway and include collaborative training pathways linked to North American academic institutions.

The profession of medicine showed a mixed picture of a perceived over-supply of general practitioners, many non-Bermudian, and a heavy reliance on non-Bermudian specialist expertise. The situation has a clear explanation, but one which must be carefully managed to assure stability of both the primary care sector and adequacy of specialists in essential areas, including those anticipated to be of importance for managing chronic preventable conditions in the coming decades: geriatrics, internal medicine, oncology and some of the surgical sub-specialties. Opportunities were also identified to attract Bermudians to the areas of medicine with a projected need, and to assure that their training is of a uniformly high quality. Keeping opportunities in primary care medicine open to newly-qualified Bermudian medical practitioners, or spouses of Bermudians, was identified as a priority.

Psychology professionals noted the evolution of the discipline, the variety of areas for work, and that students were not always informed about these opportunities. Clinical psychologists advocated educating the public and potential professionals about the field, particularly as mental health support is recognized as a key feature in preventing and controlling chronic diseases impacted by lifestyle choices. They also highlighted the need to inform local health insurers of the clinical services available in order to assure fair reimbursement arrangements. This would allow local psychological care to be appropriately covered by insurance and therefore more readily accessible to the population.

Allied health professions included multiple categories and cannot be readily summarized as the situation varies across professions. Feedback from dietitians, occupational and physical therapists, and speech and language pathologists was received. One common issue identified for future consideration was the need for new graduates in the allied health professions to be able to obtain the necessary experience in larger jurisdictions before returning to work in Bermuda. Creating opportunities for local mentoring of new trainees was a recommendation related to the issues of training, experience and assuring competency in the fields. Additionally, the need for allied health assistants was forecast based on the projected increase in chronic diseases requiring long term management.

Dentistry was the only profession assessed whose professionals perceived slight over-capacity in numbers. As a result of this, the field is especially attentive to safeguarding opportunities for Bermudian dentists.

Finally, the profession of Pharmacy noted the current workforce to be heavily dominated by non-Bermudians and that the difficulties resulting in maintaining pharmacy coverage in some businesses was a challenge. Pharmacy professionals also highlighted the need to expand the scope of pharmacists to assist in meeting the need for health education and low cost or free primary care services.

The health workforce situation analysis was conducted in the context of the current health system needs as determined by population health data. Bermuda's population health status information is reflected in the 2014 STEPS to a Well Bermuda Survey and in the comparison of this data and recent health system outcome data such as reportable deaths, births, hospital discharge diagnoses, and hospital length of stay.

The picture painted by this information was one of an aging population with increasing rates of chronic disease risk factors and chronic preventable conditions. Evidence also exists of inadequate management of chronic diseases, particularly diabetes, heart and lung disease. There is every indication that the island's generally high economic status has not protected against preventable diseases and that the high expenditure on health has not improved chronic disease management or reduced morbidity.

The strategies for addressing Bermuda's future health system challenges focus on preparing a health workforce which is not simply quantitatively adequate but possesses the skills and experience to prevent and control chronic non-communicable diseases. The workforce must be stable; that is, there must be adequate numbers of primary care professionals with long-term ties to Bermuda. Most importantly, the health workforce must be highly competent and able to meet the expectations of an educated and informed population.

The situation analysis process highlighted the need for more systematic information gathering and sharing within the health sector. Significant data gaps were identified by the professionals engaged in this process. In addition to assuring appropriate human resources for health in the coming decade, this strategic plan seeks to identify information required and sources of this information to support ongoing planning.

Bermuda is at an important stage of its Human Resources for Health planning. With significant ageing of the population in combination with the high prevalence of important risk factors for the development of non-communicable diseases, Bermuda like many countries in the Caribbean is dealing with serious health challenges. In order to meet the needs of the population in the middle and long term, resources must be invested in Human Resources for Health planning. Planning must also accommodate health system reform and include a multi-disciplinary and inter-sectorial approach that embraces private and public interest groups in the process. Finally, Human Resource for Health planning must be continuous and must evolve over time to address changing health system and population health needs.

Definitions (Pan American Health Organization, PAHO):

- **Strategic Plan:** A plan defining the strategies to achieve goals and/or the implementation framework for a health policy and longer term vision
- **Strategic Direction or Objective:** Description of an overarching objective/ a specific area that needs to be addressed to advance the goals
- **Strategic actions:** The actions that will lead to the achievement of the objective or goals

- **Operational plan:** a subset of a strategic plan. Presents more detailed information:
 - Includes the managerial requirements
 - Elaborates short-term implications
 - Outlines how to get things done with the resources (people, money, time, facilities, information, etc.)
 - Describes how to carry out tasks

Note, an Operational Plan is specific to each institution and workplace and is not part of this document. It must be created within the relevant organizations, according to the organizations' needs and resources.

Areas for future exploration and data-collection:

The situation analysis exercise, detailed in *Bermuda Health Workforce, 2017*, identified several areas within each profession which require attention. Answers to questions on the adequacy of current human resources were limited by missing data. The information gathered relied on anecdotal evidence, clinical experiences and "widely held beliefs" which have not yet been proven. However, these constitute the most accurate information available at this time.

In the months ahead, as this Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan is implemented, efforts to gather specific health system data will continue. Important data to collect include: nationalities of all healthcare professionals and ties to Bermuda; work hours (part-time vs full-time); plans for retirement (the assumption of age 65 is known to be inaccurate in many cases); precise standards of practice in clinical care; care-specific health outcome data; quality and quantity of continuing education for

professionals. Input from the general public, the consumers of health care services, will be important to consider as well.

Undoubtedly, many other items of information will be identified as missing by the agencies embarking on implementing the strategic plan. Opportunities for sharing workforce planning experiences, resources and information between agencies will need to take place to assure all human resource for health planning is based on the highest quality empirical data and health system information.

Bermuda Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan, 2018 - 2022

The information below results from multi-disciplinary consultations with healthcare professionals, 2016-2017. Common themes evolved which address the question of how to better meet 21st Century health workforce needs. Consultation feedback and a list of these themes is found in *Bermuda Health Workforce, 2017*.

Goal: to reform Bermuda’s health workforce to meet 21st Century population health needs

1. GOVERNANCE		
Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
1.1	Strengthen Legislative and Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Identify gaps in legislation and address as required-- ie. amend obsolete professional statutory instruments; mandate non-communicable disease reporting as required for community health assessment for health system planning ii. Develop necessary legislation and policies to ensure safe healthcare practices (ie. professional codes of conduct, and standards of practice to foster evidence-based clinical practices) iii. Ensure adequate human and financial resources (ie. budget should reflect health system requirements to achieve appropriate levels of staffing and skills mix) iv. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms (ie. allocate human resources, create policies and procedures for compliance monitoring and

		enforcement of legislation and policies).
1.2	Establish information systems for health to include human resources for health database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Invest in system-wide 'information system for health'; enlist collaborative financial support by regulators, providers, insurers/payers) ii. Assure data on health human resources is captured and shared appropriately
1.3	Collaborate to reform healthcare provision, financing and reimbursement system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review and amend standard health benefit coverage and reimbursement ii. Promote preventive health through benefit design iii. Incentivize providers towards positive outcomes iv. Ensure adequate human and financial resources (ie. budget should reflect health system requirements to achieve appropriate levels of staffing and skills mix) v. Performance-based remuneration vi. Reduce co-pay and out-of-pocket costs vii. reimburse allied health professionals and psychologists appropriately
1.4	Strengthen coordinated workforce policy development and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish an agency to plan human resources for health ii. Assure monitoring and evaluation of the workforce plan

2. TRAINING AND EDUCATION		
Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
2.1	Collaborate with education sector to enhance health workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Promote interest in healthcare professions ii. Mentor students with interest and aptitude iii. Provide training opportunities from entry level to specialties iv. Promote and prioritize basic math and science proficiency in schools such as STEM education, scholarships etc.

2.2	Develop skills and professional training of existing health workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Reorient workforce to provide excellent people-centered, primary health care ii. Promote continuing professional education and training in 'soft skills' such as social and medical ethics, cultural competence, racial bias awareness, risk communication motivational counseling etc.
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3. ACCESS TO QUALITY HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH		
Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
3.1	Advocate for collaboration with the Department of Immigration to facilitate efficient recruitment of appropriate health professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish formal collaboration and regular communication between statutory professional boards, associations and Department of Immigration in order to assure timely processing of work permit applications, and streamline work permit paperwork processes ii. Address policy barriers to recruitment such as allowing accompanying family
3.2	Create a national human resource for health management system to ensure sustainable health workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop policies and processes within health institutions to enhance recruitment and retention of workers ii. Assure robust vetting of professional iii. Optimize job satisfaction by improving conditions of work, local career opportunities, remuneration packages, performance based incentives, retention strategies, optimal utilization of full skill sets etc.
3.3	Match workforce skills mix to the population's health needs to improve health, wellness and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Recruit professionals with skills in prevention, health promotion and primary health care, as a focus ii. Identify and create the pathway

		<p>for newer health workforce categories required to address 21st century needs: health educators, health informatics specialists, health psychologists etc</p> <p>iii. Assure high quality, standardized care for chronic health conditions by collaborating with professional boards/councils and associations</p>
Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
3.4	Maintain updated standards of professional practice and enhance compliance	<p>i. Foster up to date health care standards and care using the authority of the professional statutory bodies and associations</p>

Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan, Graphic:

Health workforce planning must span the development continuum, from encouraging and preparing school age children and youth to enter health professions, to recruiting and retaining competent professionals.

Educate, motivate, encourage, support



Attract, Train, Recruit, Develop, Retain





GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

Ministry of Health
Office of Chief Medical Officer



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World Health
Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Americas**