



Internationally Trained Physicians Access Coalition

The Internationally Trained Physicians Access Coalition (ITPAC) is an alliance of groups/organizations of internationally trained/experienced physicians (ITPs), as well allied groups/organizations providing supports to ITPs.

This coalition began in Ontario and opened to working with like-minded groups across the country to establish a national advocacy voice.

Purpose

ITPAC (“the coalition”) works to galvanize the efforts of ITPs advocating for systems change to enable their skills and experience to benefit the Canadian health care system; and to enable ITPs to pursue careers in medicine or commensurate roles outside of medical practice.

The coalition works in two main areas:

- 1. Professional Licensure:** Addressing systemic obstacles and advocating for solutions that provide equitable, timely access to licensure, residency opportunities and related supports.
- 2. Alternative Career Options:** Supporting alternative health care-related career pathways and employment opportunities that utilize the skills and experience of ITPs.

The coalition's work includes the identification of systemic barriers based on lived experiences, and the promotion of enduring health care systems solutions that benefit all residents of Canada, while ensuring a high standard of health care. The coalition is committed to sharing best practices, facilitating connections, and supporting strategic networking.

How We Work

- The coalition is composed of at least one representative from each aligned group
- Representation is determined by each aligned group and may include rotating members
- Decision making is by consensus wherever possible
- Meets monthly and organizes its work via working groups
- WES acts as the coordinator for the coalition and provides administrative support

Background

The global pandemic (COVID 19-SARS2) has exacerbated long standing issues in Canada's health care system. Statistics Canada noted that 47 percent of those with a health education from abroad are unemployed or underutilized in the labour market. The last full scope census (2016) revealed that about 20 percent of the total number of physicians in Canada are immigrants. Since then, roughly another 3,500 immigrant physicians have arrived in the country bringing their numbers to approximately 32,000.

Physician shortages and long wait times are long-standing problems across the country. Canada has 2.8 physicians/1000 residents, placing us at the lower end of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) spectrum of doctors per population (3.5 is the average). Statistics Canada notes that nearly 5 million Canadians do not have a regular health care provider.

The rationale to enhance access to medical professionals include population aging, consistent declines in natural birth rates, increasing health care needs of vulnerable populations such as elders in long-term care, Indigenous communities, migrant workers, and Canada's steady reliance on immigration for economic and population growth. Immigrants to Canada now account for 90 percent of net labour force growth and by 2030 or sooner, this cohort will be the sole source of population growth. These are just a few factors driving the need to ensure better labour market integration and employment outcomes for internationally trained physicians.

Numbers are not the only reason; economic, racial, and social justice requires the efforts of groups like ITPAC to advocate for broad systems change to bring about equity to Canada's health care system. Benefits include improved overall access to health care providers including linguistic and culturally specific services to an increasingly diverse population.

Improving the licensure timelines and processes, reducing the costs, and ensuring meaningful access to commensurate health care related occupations for internationally trained and experienced physicians will provide a sound return on investment for all residents of Canada.

Member Groups

Networks/Associations (as of September 2021)

Association Name	Location	Membership	About
Internationally Trained Medical Doctors Canada Network (iCAN)	Toronto (GTA)	500+	Facilitates network building and knowledge-sharing through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annual networking workshops • Monthly leadership seminar • Mentorship & coaching • Job search support • Interview and reference support
Immigrant Researchers Support Network (IRSN)	Ontario-wide (Toronto-based) Hosted by Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services	~180	Aims to build capacity in Canadian research and evaluation for IEPs through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer research modules • Job opportunities through training and networking • Providing a sense of belonging through networking and peer-checking • Fellowship and bridging with researchers and academics • Guiding academic enrollment processes • Supporting with settlement processes
International Doctor's Network (IDN)	Ontario-based Some members have moved to other provinces	~550	Aims to facilitate the successful integration of ITPs into Canadian society through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy • Networking

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career planning • Mentorship • Study groups • Group activities (conferences and workshops) • Resume, portfolio, and interview assistance • System navigation support • Promotion/prevention activities
<p>Internationally Trained Physicians of Ontario (ITPO)</p>	<p>Ontario-wide Online</p>	<p>~100</p>	<p>Liases with allied organizations / public campaigns in order to secure pathways to practice for ITPs and facilitate clinical exposure for ITPs while undergoing the process of professional licensure. Aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the incorporation of ITPs/IMGs into the health care system commensurate with their experience • Ensure representation of ITPs at tables with key stakeholders • Provide practical support to ITPs at all stages of licensure • Support ITPs who are currently training or practicing within the Canadian health care system
<p>Kingston Immigrant-Led Working Group (ILWG) Internationally Educated Health Professionals Committee</p>	<p>Kingston, Ontario Hosted by KEYS Job Centre</p>	<p>~10</p>	<p>ILWG brings together immigrants and local allies to promote a vision of inclusion; the IEHP committee focuses on advocacy for IEHPs seeking to practice in Canada. Work revolves around 3 main areas:</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating for improved labour market outcomes • Enhancing public awareness of economic, social, and cultural contributions of immigrants • Building connections through sharing stories of struggle and success; establishing a system of mutual support
Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO)	Ontario-wide Online	~2,000 members Facebook study group ~300 members WhatsApp Group ~60 participants Average in weekly meetings	Supports international medical graduates and Canadians who studied medicine abroad through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting free weekly educational sessions for the Canadian Medical Licensing exams • Providing information sessions about exam preparation, CaRMS application processes, and Practice Ready Assessment programs • Initiating and conducting wellness sessions • Enabling teaching experience for individuals who have successfully passed the LMCC exam <p>Aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide relevant information about medical licensing processes in Canada

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unite immigrant international medical graduates and Canadians who studied medicine abroad • Encourage a positive spirit amongst members
Niagara IMG/IEN Support Group	Niagara Region, Ontario Online	~30 members	<p>Supports physicians, nurses, and allied health care professional to be able to work in the Canadian health care sector through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information exchange on Canadian licensing exams • Connections with local immigrant services for employment opportunities • Individualized study groups based on the needs of members • Workshops in partnership with institutions such as YMCA employment & immigrants Services, Niagara Folk Arts and Niagara Workforce Planning Board • Networking and volunteer opportunities

Programs (as of September, 2021)

Program Name	Location	Client Served	About
<p>Internationally Trained Medical Doctors Bridging Program (ITMD) Canada Network Post-Graduate Training Program from Ryerson University</p>	Ontario-wide Hybrid online and in-person	~50 per year 375 to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides professional development training for ITMDs Offers a total of 6 courses to support competence in health care research and health care project management Programming includes practicum placement for ITMDs in non-licensed health care employment positions Aims to support ITMDs in securing employment or post-graduate education, including employment in licensed professionals
<p>Community Matters Toronto BRIEDGE</p>	Toronto (GTA)	~20 – 30 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides 8–10-week workshops to support internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) gain the necessary tools to find meaningful alternative employment. Aims to build a network of IEHPs helping other IEHPs.
<p>The Learning Enrichment Foundation Support for Internationally Trained Individuals –</p>	Ontario-wide (Toronto-based)	~300 participants Served in the Foreign Credential	<p>Foreign Credential Recognition Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized 1-on-1 support for ITPs to market their skills and begin their careers in Canada

Foreign Credential
Recognition
Program

Alternative Careers
in Health Promotion
and Education for
IMGs

Recognition
Program to date

~40 participants
Served in the
Alternative
Careers Program
to date

- Aids clients in mapping the credential recognition process, finding related jobs or alternative career options, and exploring training, education, and assessment options
- Clients are connected with professional networks and associations
- Loan component of up to \$15,000CAD available for career-related expenses (including courses, exams, books, qualification assessments, association fees, professional certifications, bridge training, and living allowances)

Alternative Career in Health
Promotion and Education for IMGs:

- 24-week blended program including four courses, work-experience placement, mentorship, and job-search/coaching support
- Helps to provide ITPs with the necessary skills identified by prospective employers
- Supports ITPs to leverage their medical knowledge and enhance their contribution to health

			promotion and education in Ontario
<p>WIL Employment Connections / Access Centre for Regulated Employment Alternative Career Options for Internationally Educated Health Professionals (ACO)</p>	London, Ontario	~60 participants per year	<p>Supports IEHPs by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session • Career readiness workshops on Canadian culture, transitional skills, and labour market information • Connections for IEHPs to health-related employment opportunities • Case managed licensure support for regulated professionals • Low interest loans to support pathways to licensure and alternative careers
<p>Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre Niagara Foreign Credential</p>	Niagara Region, Ontario	~150	<p>Aims to improve labour market integration outcomes of internationally trained individuals.</p> <p>Supports IEHPs with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credential recognition • Information regarding steps to re-enter profession or an alternative, and advocacy with regulatory bodies as needed • Loan opportunities for career related costs