

## International Committee: report to ARM 2022 audio transcript

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Hello RB. My name is Kitty Mohan and I'm chair of the international committee.

It is my privilege to highlight the work of the committee at this year's ARM.

From continuing to take forward work to ensure we welcome, support and value the international medical graduates who come to work in the UK – to coordinating the BMA's response to global health challenges. The last few years have shown, more than ever, the critical importance of our international work and collaboration.

Most recently, we have coordinated the BMA-wide response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine:

- the humanitarian response, including signposting how medics can help;
- calling for medical neutrality to be respected;
- highlighting the BMA's wellbeing services and employment support for those affected by the crisis;
- monitoring and advising on immigration concessions; and
- highlighting the support available to refugee doctors and medical students who were studying in Ukraine and who now find themselves in the UK.

We have been liaising with the government, GMC, Medical Schools Council - and colleagues in our European and International networks - to monitor the unfolding humanitarian crisis and identify ways in which we can help.

The impact of the war is 'global and systemic' and the situation is deteriorating further in other crisis areas as a result, risking famine and further health inequalities. Whilst we respond to the Ukrainian crisis, we also continue our other work on global health – for example, lobbying for the UK's ODA (official development assistance) to be reinstated to the UN target of 0.7% of GNI (gross national income).

This all takes place against the background of the COVID pandemic. We have kept up the momentum calling for global vaccine equity. As we predicted last year, it sadly remains the case that many lower income countries trail behind in vaccinating their populations.

We have:

- written twice to the UK Prime Minister to hold the government to account for its global vaccine pledges;
- called for action in a series of news stories, blogs and social media posts;
- published a joint statement on vaccine equity with other Royal Colleges and unions; and
- liaised with other campaigners, including #VaccinatetheWorld and the Universities Allied for Essential Medicines UK.

Whilst we seek to address the current inequity, we have also looked to the future. At the last Committee meeting we heard from the Department of Health and Social Care's International Directorate on the World Health Organization's work on a global pandemic treaty - to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The final text of a treaty is expected in spring 2024.

We hope that this is the beginning of dialogue between the BMA and UK government on this important work.

Health is global as is the medical workforce. The UK benefits hugely from the international doctors who come to the UK to work. Some for short periods, and others who choose to ultimately settle here.

We continue to work hard to try to ensure the UK provides a welcoming and supportive environment for international doctors. For example, by seeking standardised induction programmes for doctors arriving in the UK and by securing immigration concessions for doctors.

International staff are a vital and valued part of our health service.

We have successfully lobbied for many of the temporary COVID concessions to remain, such as allowing international doctors the flexibility to move between different NHS sites. But we are not complacent - there is still much more to do.

In recognition of the huge contribution international doctors have made working in the UK during the pandemic, we are calling on the government to grant doctors on a path to settlement, and their dependents, automatic Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), free of charge.

We continue to call for a permanent solution to issues around GP sponsorship, to give trainees completing training, the confidence to join a GP practice without putting their immigration status at risk. Although we successfully lobbied for doctors entering the foundation programme to have this time count towards a future application for settlement, work remains.

We are committed to pushing the government to ensure that these doctors are relieved of the burden of finding a GP practice with a sponsorship license; and alleviate the burden on busy GP practices having to navigate the process.

We also continue to work hard for concessions on the restrictive adult dependent relative rule, which effectively makes it impossible for doctors to bring their adult relatives, such as older parents, to the UK so they can look after them; and we continue our campaign on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) to ensure continuity and legal certainty, for both medical professionals and students, in post-Brexit Europe.

In our global human rights work, alongside the BMA medical ethics committee, we have highlighted the findings of last year's Uyghur Tribunal which found evidence, beyond reasonable doubt, of medical professionals' involvement in perpetuating genocide in Xinjiang, China.

This has fed into our wider work on fair and ethical procurement in the health service. We successfully lobbied for amendments to the Health and Care Act to better ensure transparency in global supply chains.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the international affairs team and the members of the International Committee, for their dedication and hard work during this eventful year. We are absolutely delighted to have our Head of International Affairs, Arthy Hartwell, back with us after her period of maternity leave, however it will be remiss of me to end this talk without giving due credit to Rebecca Mussell who acted for the last year as Interim Head of International Affairs. Rebecca was an absolute marvel and we do really wish her all the best as she moves to other areas of the BMA.

I hope you enjoy listening to the debate at this year's ARM. And look forward to meeting many of you in person in Brighton.

Thank you

**Dr Kitty Mohan**

International Committee chair