A multi-country qualitative study on General Practitioners’ migration in Europe - Is the grass really greener on the other side?

Dear participant,

Migration of healthcare professionals – and GPs (general practitioners) in particular – is a long-existing topic in global health ethics. The migration flow from developing countries to – mostly Western – countries is a well-known and well-documented topic in the world, known as the ‘Brain Drain’. This phenomenon has only become more apparent in the world, especially in Europe where borders are practically open for everyone. This is why we would like to study this phenomenon throughout Europe and because You are one of the many GPs that decided to migrate throughout Europe, it would be a great opportunity to involve You in this study.

With this letter and information, we would like to invite You to participate in this study. Please read this information carefully and do not hesitate to ask for clarification if needed. If You are interested in participating in this study please fill in the questionnaire https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8YWPBPP

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   This study is developed to describe motivating and demotivating factors influencing European GPs to migrate to a new country, to stay after migration in the new country, and/or to return to the country of origin.

2. Which methodology is used?
   To study this phenomenon a qualitative approach will be used. To collect data semi-structured web based focus group interviews using a video communication program will be conducted by two researchers. The topic guide will be developed using data from the literature. The topic guide will be tested in the first group interview and if needed modified. Interviews will be conducted in English. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

3. Are there any risks related to this study?
   The risks for participating in this research are minimal, we ask You to invest time and energy.

4. What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of participating in this study?
   This study is an opportunity to focus on understanding the migration flow of GPs within Europe as a whole instead of per individualized country; understanding the push, pull and plant factors contributing to this phenomenon while engaging GPs from both receiving and sending countries in different European countries simultaneously as well as mapping the challenges GPs, sending and hosting countries encounter due to this migration flow. Insight in this phenomenon could enable the countries involved to change policies and to set up retention strategies (if needed) and create better solutions to the workforce crisis, as well as create a bigger picture for Europe. This is a general benefit for health care – and primary care in particular – in Europe. Disadvantage of participating in this research is the time investment it will cost You.

5. What happens if You do not wish to participate in this research?
   It is up to You to decide whether You want to participate in the study, participation is voluntary. If You decide not to participate, You can let us know by e-mail. If You do participate, You can always change Your mind and stop at any time. You are not obliged to give any explanations.
6. Will You be informed if relevant information about the study becomes known at interim?
   No interim information about the study will be published.

7. What happens to Your data?
   All data that we collect will be stored in a database. Your personal data can only be accessed by the investigators. Your data will be treated confidentially and in the event of any reports/publications, the reported data will not be traceable to individuals. You always have the right to inspect and correct the data collected about You in the database. The retention period for scientific data is up to 20 years after completion of research, so until then we will retain Your data.

8. Are there any additional costs/is there a fee if You decide to participate in this research?
   There are no additional costs or fees associated with this study.

9. Has the ethical review committee of medical educational research approved this research?
   Approval for this research has been obtained from the Ethics Committee of the UZA/UA (University Hospital Antwerp/University of Antwerp) and University of Tartu, Estonia.

If You have any further questions or would like more information, please contact us: nele.michels@uantwerpen.be, Thierry.vanderheyde@student.uantwerpen.be or marta.velgan@ut.ee