

Chinese-Australians in the Australian Medical Professions

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Chinese and other Asian-Australians are playing an important role in the delivery and improvement of Australia's health care services. These ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented in a number of health professions, a trend that is being extended by their high enrolments in medicine, dentistry and related fields. This contribution is especially noteworthy in the face of the global shortage of health professionals such as doctors and nurses.

While immigration and university enrolment statistics provide some information on the number, qualifications and source countries of ethnic Chinese and other health professionals, data from Australia's 2006 census offer a much more comprehensive database for a fuller exploration of the socio-economic characteristics of this important human resource.

This paper presents findings from on-going analysis of specially tabulated statistics from the latest census, involving census questions such as ancestry, birthplace, qualifications, occupation, income and residency status. In addition to the census profiles, the paper discusses factors that influence career choice, and issues of access to and mobility within the health professions for Chinese-Australians.

The latter part of the paper draws on in-depth interviews and surveys of selected samples of Chinese-Australians in medical practice, administration, teaching or research. The paper concludes with a discussion of the role of culture in health, migration of the highly skilled, national and global issues in training, retention and deployment of health professions.