



Psychiatrist



Orlando Trujillo-Bueno came to the UK from Colombia where he was working as a forensic medical doctor, involved in investigating human rights abuses. He now works as a Senior House Officer in the Psychiatry department of an Oxford teaching hospital.

What do you enjoy about your job?

I enjoy everything I do. Psychiatry is a field where I can look after patients in a holistic way. My skills as a doctor let me address the needs of the individual's psychological and physical health as well as the social issues involved in the patient's wellbeing.

How did you qualify to work in the UK?

It was very, very difficult and took me nearly ten years. My qualifications weren't recognised by the General Medical Council (GMC) so I wasn't allowed to sit the PLAB exam [an exam which enables overseas qualified doctors to practise in the UK]. I had to complete the final year of medical school at a UK university and then sit another exam. After failing this exam for the second time and in real financial difficulty, I decided to do something else. Some years later the GMC changed its regulations and I was finally able to sit the PLAB exam.

What motivated you to keep going?

There were times when I felt like giving up but my priority was always to regain my professional identity. Because I couldn't work as a doctor I managed to develop other skills and, in a way, reinvent myself. I did an MSc in Neuroscience at the Institute of Psychiatry, a postgraduate degree in Acupuncture and Psychotherapy and was involved in setting up the first Centre for International Forensic Assistance (CIFA) in the UK, at Glasgow University, which assisted in the investigation of war crimes.

Is the qualification process easier now?

It's such a pleasure to see the positive changes regarding refugee doctors that have taken place since I first came to the UK, and I have welcomed with open arms new regulations introduced by the GMC during the last few years. There's an enormous amount of support for refugee doctors from the British Medical Association (BMA) and other organisations around the country who offer financial assistance and courses to prepare doctors for PLAB exams.

What do you think about the media portrayal of refugees in the UK?

Newspapers in particular present refugees and asylum seekers in a negative way which creates a lot of adversity and mixed feelings in the community. Raising awareness is a good way to change this and make journalists think in a more balanced way. It's important to highlight the contributions refugees make and use more positive language. Voluntary groups working with refugees also need support as they give refugees a voice and help to neutralise damaging messages.

What are you doing for Refugee Week?

As a trustee of a refugee charity in Oxford I'm always involved in Refugee Week events. One year we participated in an event, which used the idea of a water feature as the main theme to counteract the negative language used by newspapers to describe refugees such as 'flood' and 'wave'. Words are important, and it would be very useful if Refugee Week could organise key seminars or workshops to enhance both public and media awareness. This would provide an opportunity for many refugees like me to contribute with talks, workshops or seminars.

Links

British Medical Association

www.bma.org.uk

General Medical Council

www.gmc-uk.org
