Australia is one of very few nations with an explicit policy to import migrant health professionals. While the goal of workforce self-sufficiency has been set for 2025, this is unlikely to be achieved. By 2011 47% of Australians with medical degrees were overseas-born, along with 46% of pharmacists, 59% of dentists, 29% of nurses and 26% of physiotherapists. A quarter had arrived in the previous five years. Despite dramatic escalation in the scale of domestic student training in the past decade, the scale of health professional migration shows no signs of abating.

Based on analysis of a wide range of databases, this presentation asks which migrant health professionals Australia should prioritise – temporary sponsored workers, permanent skilled migrants, or former international medical students qualified in Australia? Improved understanding of the characteristics of migrant health professionals has become critical, including the outcomes for different cohorts, and their potential population health impacts. Key issues related to quality assurance and regulation are raised, of relevance to Australia and other OECD immigrant-receiving countries.