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Culture-Based Care

Caribbean, West Indians Fastest Growing Groups Working in Health Care Careers in South Florida

South Florida is experiencing an increase in Caribbean and West Indian immigrants who seek careers as home health aides, medical assistants, nurses, surgical technicians and other positions, the [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#) reports.

More than half of the long-term care health workers in the [Service Employees International Union](#) in Florida are either Haitian or West Indian. Meanwhile, in areas with high concentrations of Caribbean immigrants, such as Lauderhill and Lauderdale Lakes, technical schools offering health care specialties are increasing, the [Sun-Sentinel](#) reports. At one school operated by the [American Institute School of Health Careers](#), more than 60% of the 185 students are Caribbean, and at another school, more than 50% are from the Caribbean.

According to a 2006 [Migration Policy Institute](#) study that looked at job trends in the immigrant community, home health aides, medical assistants and registered nurses are some of the health occupations with the heaviest concentration of immigrants. About 13% of immigrants who moved to the U.S. since 2000 work in health care, according to the study. In addition, an [AARP](#) report found that there were six times as many immigrant nurses working in long-term care in 2003 as there were in 1980.

Some Caribbean immigrants say their interest in health care stems from seeing family members in their home countries care for elders. They also say that nursing is viewed as a "coveted career choice" in their homelands, according to the [Sun-Sentinel](#).

The increase in health workers of Caribbean background can be beneficial in South Florida regions that are ethnically diverse; however, there can be cultural misunderstandings, according to the [Sun-Sentinel](#). "Certain cultural norms may be valued in one culture and misunderstood in another. This happens a lot in nursing homes, where you will have a resident who mistakes firmness for berating," Monica Russo, president of the Florida State Council of SEIU, said. Instructors at the career institutes address cultural differences by teaching students how to handle dilemmas and use their own life experiences to better connect with patients (East, [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#), 1/23).