

The 'Forceps' Question: Understanding the Dynamics of Knowledge Transfer and Translation Processes in North-South Health Care Partnerships

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This paper will describe a project (the Liverpool-Mulago-Partnership) designed to reduce maternal mortality in Uganda through on-going short-stay staff exchanges. Professor Ackers has been involved in this project for 2 years now as the project evaluator. The results of the on-going evaluation raise important questions about the relationship between different forms of mobility – and particularly the duration of moves – and knowledge transfer processes. It illustrates quite poignantly the importance of understanding more carefully the types of knowledge involved and the distinction between explicit forms of knowledge (scientific or clinical skills for example) and more tacit forms of knowledge (understanding of the cultural and human resource context for example).

The results of the evaluation indicate that these latter forms of knowledge transfer and translation are much more difficult to implement and may demand different kinds of mobility. The paper will discuss recent debates around scientific mobility and knowledge transfer processes and illustrate these by reference to the Liverpool-Mulago-Partnership. A short case study of the use (or non-use) of forceps is presented to illustrate the dynamics involved.