

# Factors influencing retention of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in rural practice and evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice: a scoping review

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## Introduction

- Canada relies to a great extent on international medical graduates (IMGs) to provide primary health care, especially in rural communities.
- However, retaining IMGs in rural practices across Canada remains a challenge.

## Objective

- We explored the literature to learn what factors influence IMG retention in rural practice and what has been recommended to address these factors

## Methodology

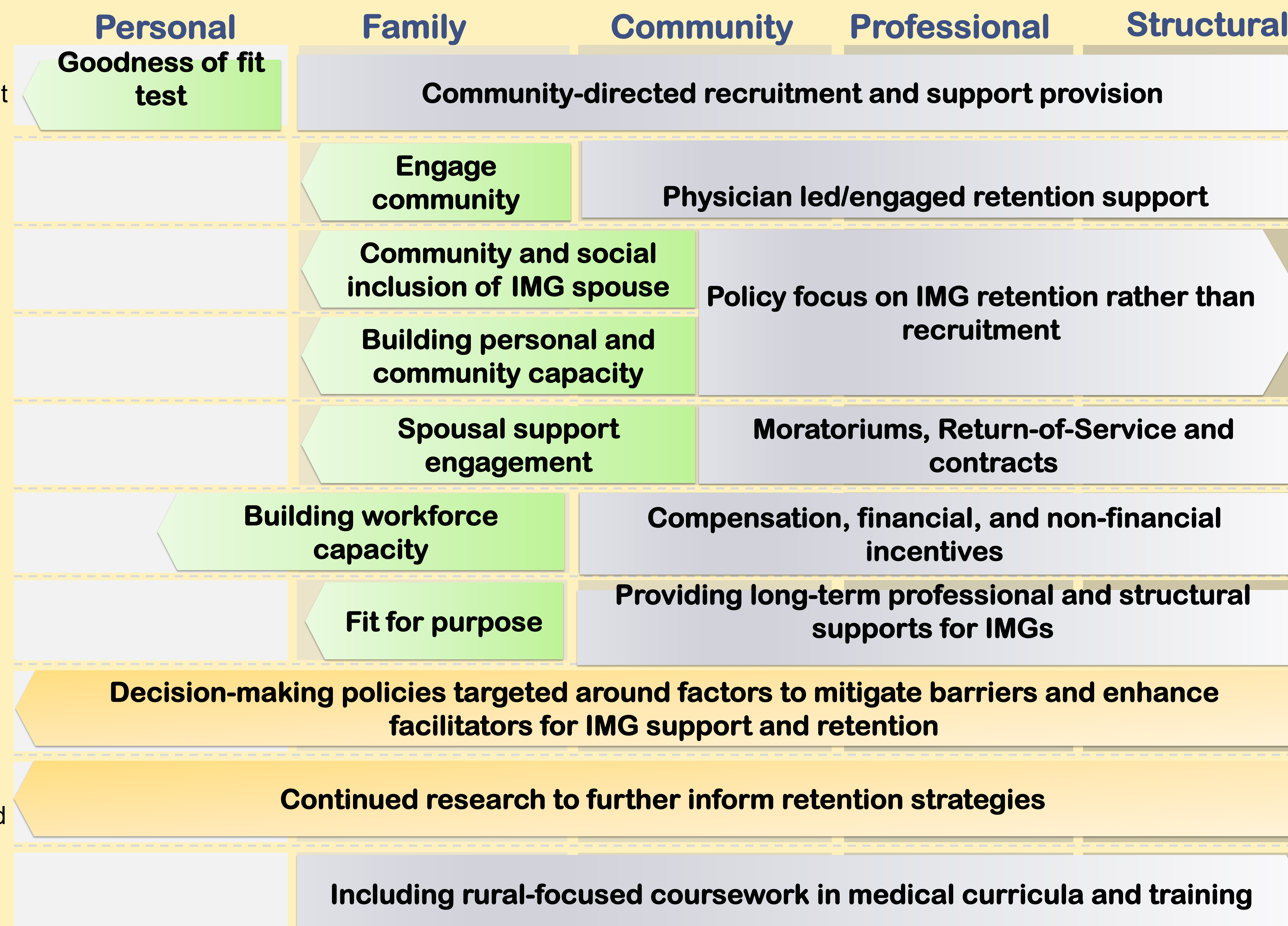
- Using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guideline for systematic scoping reviews we focused our search strategies on peer-reviewed literature sources (between January 01, 2012, to January 30, 2023) that explored and identified factors connected to the rural practice retention of IMGs in Canada (or areas transferable to the Canadian context).

## Results

Factors	Barriers	Facilitators
Personal	Personal dislike for rural practice	Personal preference for rural practice
Family	Spousal unemployment	Opportunities for education and spousal employment
Community	Community disintegration	Community integration
Professional	Increased workload, limited mobility, limited scope of work and discrimination	Comradery and professional support
Structural	Lack of infrastructural support	Recruitment and retention incentives

- 20 out of 1002 articles were selected for inclusion.
- Included articles were set in Canada and Australia.
- 14/20 (70%) of included studies were published between 2012 and 2017.
- 14/20 (70%) were set in Canada, 30% in Australia.
- 6/20 (30%) of included studies focused on IMG physicians alone, while the rest had a mix of IMGs and locally trained physicians.
- 8/20 (40%) used quantitative study methods, 9/20 (45%), qualitative, and three (15%) mixed methods.
- Factors were categorized as personal, family, professional, community and structural.

## EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE



## Discussion

- Most included studies indicated community integration as the singular most important facilitator for IMG retention in rural areas while acknowledging the value of having a well-structured healthcare system, broadened scope of practice and autonomy for the rural physician workforce.
- Policies to encourage physician retention in rural Canada should be tailored to the unique challenges and circumstances faced by IMGs

## Conclusion

- Our study identified barriers and facilitators to IMG retention in rural medicine across Canada and Australia and mapped out evidence-based recommendations for each factors.
- Support strategies tailored to the unique needs of IMGs in rural communities would improve IMG retention which could further enhance rural healthcare delivery, quality, and sustainability.