

## Medical ethics: UK uses data from doctors to find migrants

BY MARIA CHENG  
AP MEDICAL WRITER

LONDON (AP) — To track down people in Britain who may have broken immigration rules, the government is turning to a new and controversial source of information: doctors.

Doctors who work with refugees and asylum-seekers have described the move as a major breach of medical ethics, saying it isn't up to physicians to enforce immigration rules.

In letters recently made public, politicians sparred with immigration officials over a data-sharing agreement quietly signed in 2016 that gives the government access to personal information collected by the country's family doctors. Medical details are excluded.

A parliamentary health committee condemned the situation as "unacceptable," calling for the agreement to be suspended.

But Britain's immigration department has dismissed those concerns, arguing that such data sharing allows the U.K. to remove people "who might pose a danger to the public."

Medical workers back the health committee's viewpoint.

"We understand the government has a job to do, but going into health records to get patient information is not OK," said Lucy Jones, director of programs at Doctors of the World U.K. "The idea that any patient information is being shared with a government body immediately breaks their trust in a doctor-patient relationship."

Several leading medical organizations, including the Royal College of General Practitioners, Public Health England and the General Medical Council, have all slammed the data-sharing deal, saying it could worsen the health of vulnerable people and drive disease outbreaks underground, hurting health care for all.

Dalia Omer, a refugee from Sudan who was granted asylum in the U.K. in February after nearly two years, sought medical help several times while awaiting the government's decision. She said had she known about

the data sharing arrangement, she would not have been as forthcoming.

"If I knew the doctors could share information with the Home Office, I would not tell them everything," she said, referring to the British department that oversees immigration and security. She said she might even lie about certain details to protect herself.

Dr. Kitty Worthing, a London-based doctor with the group Docs Not Cops, said "the cornerstone of the doctor-patient relationship is confidentiality and this data-sharing is a direct breach of that." She said when she's advised people that their personal information could be shared with immigration officials "their reaction is always fear."

Elsewhere in Europe, many countries have a strict firewall that stops information gathered by health services from being disclosed to other government agencies. Germany's data protection office said regulations prohibit any blanket sharing of such information. In France, no data obtained by doctors is shared with the Interior Ministry.

Some health experts said it was critical that some types of health care are available to everyone in the U.K., regardless of their immigration status.

"With HIV treatment, it makes much more sense to treat everybody with HIV, because treatment lowers the level of virus in your blood so you can't pass it on," said Kat Smithson of the National AIDS Trust. "If people are not diagnosed because they're not accessing health care, they're not aware they're living with HIV, which means they're far more likely to pass it on to somebody else."

The British government, however, says protecting its borders outweighs those concerns.

"We believe that the release of (patient) information is lawful and proportionate action in pursuit of the effective enforcement of the U.K.'s immigration policy," wrote Caroline Noakes, the minister of state for immigration, and James O'Shaughnessy, parliamentary undersecretary of state for health, responding to lawmaker's concerns.



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Shirley Powell crochets a hat at Greenhouse Living in Sheridan Friday, March 30, 2018.

## Hobbies increasingly important with age

It is no surprise that smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and physical inactivity increase the risk of mortality as we age.

But did you know that hobbies can be an important component of successful aging?

At any age, hobbies can make you happy, so hobbies are a critical part of healthy retirement planning. Studies show that active participation in hobbies is

associated with significantly decreased mortality, while having no hobbies is strongly linked to mortality. One of our hobbies should involve

physical activity, which will have long-term benefits. With an increase in activity, there is also a slower rate of motor function decline. Plus, being physically active helps control chronic illnesses such as diabetes and arthritis. Choices for exercising vary from walking to golf to yoga or Tai Chi. A sport you enjoyed when you were younger may well work for you as a senior.

Socialization is important because retirement often means you leave your friends at work. If you don't have a wide social circle, hobbies such as volunteering give seniors the opportunity to get out in the community and meet new people. Traveling also is a great way to socialize.

Evelyn McNabb didn't start her quilting hobby until she was 83. An elder in Green House Living's Watt Cottage, McNabb attends a weekly quilting group that meets at Immanuel Lutheran Church. Six to



Shirley Powell crochets a hat at Greenhouse Living in Sheridan Friday, March 30, 2018.

nine ladies gather to work on forming, sewing and tying quilts.

"I'm sorry I didn't know about this opportunity earlier," McNabb said, adding that the baby quilts she works on are donated to Sheridan Memorial Hospital. "I like doing something for others."

Plus, McNabb enjoys the social aspect of the group.

"It's nice to be with these ladies — we visit and talk all the time we are quilting," she said. "We have

lunch there too."

Another of McNabb's hobbies, reading, contributes to mental well-being. Learning a new skill, a new language or a new craft is challenging and mentally stimulating. When you're busy, there's less time to focus on your ailments. You are also more interesting because you have more to share.

Shirley Powell, an 82-year-old elder in Green House Living's Watt Cottage, said she didn't have much time for hobbies when she was younger working full time at Shipton's and raising three children. Today, Powell was poring over instructions for how to do a "V" stitch for a hat she is

crocheting. Powell's other hobby is putting together a weekly jigsaw puzzle at a card table in the den. When asked if her hobbies make her happier, Powell smiled. "It does me," she said. "I'm content."

How many hobbies should you have? Wes Moss, financial planner and author of "You Can Retire Sooner Than You Think: The Five Money Secrets of the Happiest Retirees," surveyed retirees in 46 states. Moss found that the happiest retirees have three to five hobbies and are really busy.

DEE STRAUSS is an administrator at Green House Living.



DEE STRAUSS

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### SENIOR HAPPENINGS

• The SheridanAires will present a "Sing into Spring" concert at The Hub on Smith Thursday at 12:30 p.m. The Hub is located at 211 Smith St.

• A Fort Phil Kearny tour and lunch with the Story Lunch Bunch will take place April 10. Participants will ride to Story for lunch at The Hub's Story meal site followed by a trek to the fort for a historic presentation in the visitor's center. The group will depart from Heritage Towers at 10:15 a.m. and The Hub at 10:30 a.m. The group will head back from Story at 2:30 p.m. The suggested contribution for registered seniors is \$20 and the fee for unregistered folks is \$23. Sign up and pre-pay by April 5.

• The next Antique Roadshow at The Hub on Smith will take place April 10 with check-in beginning at 1 p.m. Ken and Sue Heuermann, Alex Banks, Wayne Sullenger and Darla Judes will combine knowledge to give their best estimate as to the value of your precious items.

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Sat- Turkey Tetrazzini  
Sun - Baked Potato Bar w/chili, ham or cheese sauce  
Mon- Turkey Filet

**UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS**

Tue- Happy Birthday Doris Day	10:30 a.m.	Café
Wed- Gentle Yoga	10:30 p.m.	Community Room
Thurs - SheridanAires Sing into Spring	12:30 p.m.	Café
Fri - Dominoes	9:30 a.m.	Café
Sat- Woodcarvers	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Art Studio
Sun- Billiards Open Play	9:00 a.m.	Billiards Room

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