

The Calgary Herald

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Program lets foreign doctors walk the talk -- in English

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A 16-week University of Calgary course is helping foreign doctors who live in Alberta upgrade their English skills, increasing their likelihood of being selected for training that would allow them to practice medicine here.

The Medical Communication Assessment Project, which began as a pilot project in 2006, involves eight weeks of class instruction where the students practice their language skills with actors and instructors.

Participants also complete an eight-week practicum with a physician mentor in the community.

"We hope the work we do will have an impact on improving access of immigrant physicians into practicing in Alberta," said David Watt, an education professor who co-created the project.

Although Alberta is facing a significant shortage of physicians, many foreign doctors say they have trouble gaining admission to programs in the province that would allow them to practice here.

Watt said the program has helped more than a dozen foreign-trained doctors obtain residency seats or positions as clinical assistants in Alberta.

Forty students are expected to complete the program this year.