Pre-Departure Training For Health Care Learners

University of Manitoba

Originally prepared by the U of M Global Health Interest Group, J. Penner, C. Yurkowski, Y. Shrom (2012)
Revised by the U of M Global Health Concentrations Program, E. Kim (2014)

And University of Toronto Pre-Departure Handbook
Introduction

Experiences in International Health Care Delivery

Experiences in international health care delivery can be both an instructional and eye-opening component of medical education. Every year, students from the University of Manitoba partake in multi-national health exchanges and independent global health care initiatives. Students represent the university in an international forum, while at the same time acting as leaders for future generations of health care professionals. As such, we must recognize our role as learners in a culturally sensitive arena; thus, it is important to understand basic principles of global health. With this guide and our crash course in global health, it is our goal to make your international experience as enriching as possible. We also hope to prompt you to reflect on some of the hurdles you may face when taking part in your international health experience.

Using the CFMS National Guidelines for Pre-departure training as a model, we have divided this handbook into the following sections:

1. Personal Health
2. Health Safety
3. Cultural Competency
4. Language Competency
5. Ethical Considerations

At the conclusion of each section, we have included additional reading resources as to further expand on your understanding of the subject and to encourage you to seek out additional resources to better prepare you to learn in unfamiliar settings. In addition, we have added scenarios at the end of certain sections in order to spark conversation and rumination within yourself and between colleagues.

Core Readings:

Additional Reading:
- GHEC Online Modules – online modules on global health prepared by the Global Health Education Consortium globalhealtheducation.org/Modules/SitePages/Home.aspx

U of M Resources:
- International Centre for Students and World W.I.S.E programs - 541 University Centre University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada, Tel (204) 474-8501 Fax 204 474-7562 Email ics@ad.umanitoba.ca http://umanitoba.ca/student/ics/
- U of M elective website: http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/education/undergraduate/electives.html
Click on Travel Package Information
UGME Mission & Objectives

Mission Statement

To provide an environment which will assist students to become competent, caring, ethical physicians with the ability to think critically. This experience will prepare students to choose wisely their area of training, to successfully continue their education, and subsequently to meet responsibilities to their patients and society.

The 7 Roles with Learning Objectives:

1. Medical Expert
2. Communicator
3. Collaborator
4. Manager
5. Health Advocate
6. Scholar
7. Professional

Medical Expert: The student will be able to:

1. Discuss and apply the core knowledge in the basic foundational sciences to the practice of medicine.
2. Apply the basic science principles that underlie the practice of evidence-based medicine.
3. Perform a complete, accurate, and focused history and physical examination, using a patient centered approach.
4. Formulate a differential diagnosis and management plan based on:
   a) The clinical presentation
   b) Appropriate diagnostic investigations
5. Assess clinical presentation and order appropriate laboratory and diagnostic tests, to investigate prioritized issues identified in the differential diagnosis list, using a systematic and scientific approach.
6. Maintain accurate patient records and files and demonstrate confidentiality in the handling of personal health information
7. Assess the indications and complications of basic medical procedures and perform them at a defined level of competence.
8. Describe the various healthcare services that are delivered to First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples, and the historical basis for the systems as they pertain to these communities.
9. Discuss the rationale for involving consultant physicians and allied health care experts in the care of the patient. Assess the need for consultants and allied health experts involvement in each patients care, and make appropriate referrals / consultations.
Communicator: The student will be able to:

1. Assess and integrate into patient care plans, the influences of the patient's ideas, beliefs and expectations, age, ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic background.

2. Utilize effective patient centered communication skills during data gathering and information sharing, which includes attentive listening, open-ended inquiry, empathy and clarification to ensure understanding.

3. Display an approach to patient interactions which develops rapport, trust and ethical therapeutic relationships with patients and families that are characterized by understanding, respect, honesty and empathy.

4. Deliver information to patients, families and health professionals in a manner that is easily understood, encourages discussion and participation in decision making.

5. Describe the principles of cultural safety in medicine at large with an emphasis on how this pertains to First Nations, Inuit and Metis patients.

6. Demonstrate efficient techniques for accurate and timely record keeping (written or electronic) of clinical encounters and plans.

Collaborator: The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate effective team skills within a health care context.

2. Describe and apply effective conflict management skills when managing conflict within teams, between teams and within the health care system.

3. Discuss the roles, responsibilities and scopes of practice of health care professionals, and recognize their contribution to effective patient care, including preventative care.

4. Recognize the central role of patients and their families in the provision of patient centered care.

Manager: The student will be able to:

1. Describe the role of the physician in the health care system and their relationships with other health professionals, the facilities / contexts in which they work and the health care community.

2. Discuss the structure and function of the Canadian health care system in broad terms and local influences in the provision of health care.

3. Discuss issues relevant to the access, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and delivery of health care in multiple settings.

4. Discuss the prevention and management of health care errors.

5. Apply basic principles of continuous quality improvement and discuss their importance to a health care setting.

6. Describe approaches that have been implemented to improve the health of First Nations, Inuit or Metis peoples, locally, regionally or nationally.
Health Advocate: The student will be able to:

1. Explain the determinants of health at local, national and global levels, and assess their impact on individual patient and community health.
2. Describe the influence of epidemics, pandemics, civilian and natural disasters on the delivery of optimal health care.
3. Apply appropriate health promotion and disease prevention strategies.
4. Describe barriers to health care access and the impact on patient health outcomes.
5. Describe the ethical and legal responsibilities of physicians to patients and the communities they serve.
6. Identify resources available to the health care team that aids in the prevention of illness and disease and select appropriate resources for a given situation.
7. Describe the interaction between primary health care and public health.

Scholar: The student will be able to:

1. Select appropriate resources to meet educational needs.
2. Describe the basic principles of clinical and translational research.
3. Apply the principles of the scientific method within evidence-based medicine:
   - Pose a scholarly question
   - Formulate a hypothesis
   - Perform a systematic search for evidence
   - Determine an appropriate research methodology
   - Select and apply appropriate methods to address the hypothesis
   - Write a short research paper using accepted scientific templates
   - Discuss the findings of the research study
4. Discuss the principles of research ethics and critical appraisal.
5. Critique medical literature according to accepted standards in order to determine scientific validity and application to clinical medicine.
6. Describe how translational research is conducted, evaluated, explained to patients and applied to patient care.
7. Demonstrate presentation and communication skills that can be applied to various teaching encounters and formats.
**Professional: The student will be able to:**

1. Recognize and follow the codes of professionalism adopted by the College of Medicine, as well as those developed by their peers and supported by the College.

2. Exhibit professional behaviors in the practice of medicine, including honesty, integrity, compassion, respect and altruism.

3. Engage in critical self-evaluation, self-directed learning and seek assistance whenever necessary.

4. Identify and appropriately manage ethical issues encountered in practice settings.

5. Demonstrate the principles of patient confidentiality as outlined by professional practice standards and legal requirements.

6. Discuss basic legal concepts as they apply to the practice of medicine.

7. Describe the basic concepts of clinical and societal ethics and apply them to actual cases and situations.

8. Demonstrate responsibility through completing assigned tasks and meeting deadlines.

**Notes:**
Section 1: Personal Health

An essential component of travel in any capacity is personal health and prevention of illness. Taking responsibility for one’s own health is especially important when working in a setting with populations at risk and with those susceptible or already inflicted with ill health. Despite your participation in a health care setting, health care delivery and resources may be very different from those you are used to at home institutions. Before departing, it is essential that one understands the common diseases, infections, and susceptibilities of the region that you will be working in. In preparation, you should take steps to minimize your risk of illness in order to make your experience as pleasant and enriching as possible. Many travel clinics are available in Winnipeg, run both privately and by the WHRA, that can provide you essential information on vaccines and travel precautions for the area you are to travel to. Outside of Winnipeg, check with your local RHA who often run travel clinics through their associated public health departments. If you wish to visit a travel clinic for such information make sure to give yourself plenty of time (at least 2-3 months before departure) in order to allow for the time it may take if multiple doses of a particular vaccine is needed. The Centre for Disease Control website also provides valuable information regarding travel health and safety. Up to date travel notices are also posted on this website. Similarly, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) website provides current travel advisories as well as travel health notices. Abbreviated Travel health fact sheets can be found on this website. In addition, the PHAC provides useful information for health professionals traveling abroad, for example: food safety, immunizations & vaccines, emergency preparedness and response, health promotion, injury prevention, and lab bio-safety and bio-security. Finally, it is important to recognize that maintaining good health encompasses not only physical health but mental and emotional well-being. Being prepared for your travel abroad can ease you into such unfamiliar circumstances lessening discomfort and facilitating clarity of mind.

**Travel Health Clinics:**
The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority offers a travel health and tropical medicine program specific to health profession students. You will have to identify yourself as a medical student when you contact the clinic to make an appointment. You will have to obtain a letter from the Electives Program Assistant that verifies your status as a medical student and the location and dates of your elective; this info must be taken with you to your appointment.

The Travel Health Clinic is located at:
490 Hargrave Street
Winnipeg, MB R3A 0X7
Telephone for appointments: 1-204-940-8747

**Reporting Requirements:**
The College of Medicine requires that you fill out and report your attendance to a recognized travel health clinic prior to and following your international elective.

– Travel Health Documentation Form for Electives in Developing and/or Challenging Health Care Settings

– Pre and Post Travel Health Clinical Certificate of Attendance

These forms are included at the end of this document. Students are also encouraged to voluntarily self-report information regarding health issues associated with your elective. This will assist the College of Medicine in providing optimal advice to future elective students.
Waiver and Release:
Students participating in medical electives in developing nations and other challenging settings are required to complete a University of Manitoba Acknowledgement of Responsibility and Liability Waiver Form. A copy of this waiver is located at the conclusion of this document.

Reporting Requirements:
The College of Medicine requires that you fill out and report your attendance to a recognized travel health clinic prior to and following your international elective. This documentation is included at the end of this document. Students are also encouraged to voluntarily self-report information regarding health issues associated with your elective. This will assist the College of Medicine in providing optimal advice to future elective students.

Immunizations:
Because immunizations vary from country to country and even within countries, prior to your departure, it is important to seek out qualified health professionals that can help you determine which vaccines are necessary. It is important to differentiate which vaccines are recommended and which are required as certain vaccines are obligatory for entry into a country. Yellow fever is an example of a vaccine that is compulsory for entry into many countries. You may be denied at customs without proof of immunization from a registered yellow fever vaccine provider; the PHAC website can direct you to such certified yellow fever providers. Travel clinics and/or the websites of the above agencies can help discern vaccine stipulations and the pros and cons of those that are recommended. Again, it is important to give yourself enough time to allow for extended dosing regimens.

Malaria Prophylaxis:
It is essential to obtain proper malaria prophylaxis prior to departing Canada. Although such prophylaxis can be purchased abroad, it is safest to do so in Canada. As different regimens have different side effects and dosing schedules it is important to choose a method that works best for you. A link to brief fact sheets for various prophylaxis methods is provided in the additional reading section. Moreover, pack all medications, including malaria prophylaxis, in your carry-on baggage in their original labelled containers. Carry a copy of the original prescription with you including the generic and trade name to facilitate airport security and customs screening. If you are carrying an unusual prescription medication, check that it is legal in the Country you are visiting by contacting the foreign Government office in the country you plan to visit prior to departure. Lastly, do not forget the importance of using insecticide and malaria bed-nets in preventing malaria transmission.

Health Insurance:
As a student, it is important that you choose a travel health insurance plan that is appropriate for your travels. It is also important that your plan covers you for the entirety of your travels. Your U of M student health care plan covers you for only certain health circumstances so it may be prudent to purchase additional coverage. Review your policy carefully before departure. A link to the U of M health care policy on travel is located in the additional resources section.

Disability Insurance
Disability insurance is the sole responsibility of the student. Each student should purchase this privately.
Important Questions to Ask When Purchasing Health Insurance:

- Does the plan include hospitalization coverage for accidents and illnesses while abroad?
- Does it cover you for pre-existing medical conditions?
- What is the maximum amount of coverage that is provided?
- Are there deductibles? If so, what are they?
- Will the plan include emergency room expenses? Is the coverage sufficient?
- What is the coverage for medical evacuation? Is the coverage sufficient?
- In the event of death, what is the coverage for repatriation? Is it sufficient?
- Will they cover the costs involving transporting you home if ill?
- What information does the insurance company need prior to payment?
- Is there a 24-hour contact number in English (with translation services for health care providers in the host country)?
- Is dental coverage provided?
- Is ambulance or emergency transport to a hospital covered?
- When does the plan begin and end? Can you easily extend coverage? While overseas?
- What is not covered by your plan? Does this affect you?

Malpractice Insurance:

As all electives and exchange programs are different, before departure students should enquire regarding malpractice insurance. It is best to enquire from the host institution what kind of medical malpractice insurance if any is needed.

Personal Protective Equipment and Post Exposure Prophylaxis:

As all experiences are different, it is important to enquire about the kind of protective equipment that will provided on site. Examples of such equipment include but are not limited to gloves, masks, eye-protection, lab coats etc. One may also wish to inquire about post-exposure protocols at visiting institutions and how you might access such medications if need be. Examples of such PEP include HIV/AIDS and rabies.

Access to Medical Care:

While some will be working in health care centers where access to health professionals is straightforward, others may be working in more remote setting where access is limited. In such circumstances, knowing where your closest medical facility is located and how to get there prior to departure is prudent. An adequate supply of labeled personal medications and prescriptions should be obtained prior to departure as local availability may differ from widespread availability at home.

Additional Readings:

- US Centers for Disease Control Travelers’ Health Site – This site has a wide variety of resources on travel health, as well as country-specific information - [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/)
- WHO International Travel and Health Site – Provides information on health risks for travelers - [http://www.who.int/ith/en/](http://www.who.int/ith/en/)
- IAMAT – The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers has a well-organized website with travel health information – [http://www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)
- U of M Health & Wellness [http://umanitoba.ca/student/health-wellness/index.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/health-wellness/index.html) 204-295-9032
Notes:
Section 2: Travel Safety

Like in any unfamiliar situation, it is important to acknowledge basic safety precautions before travel. Different countries pose different risks to safety, thus it is important to familiarize yourself with common dangers in your country and region of travel. As certain regions pose greater risk of political turmoil and subsequent possibility of acute disruption, steps to prepare oneself with a risk management plan should be undertaken. In addition, acute weather changes and natural phenomena are more commonplace in certain destinations. One should familiarize with such possibilities. All in all, it is important to be aware of risks in order to formulate an approach to minimizing such risks and potential for harm.

Entry and Exit requirements:
The importance of checking visa requirements well in advance must be emphasized in order to give yourself enough time to make necessary arrangements. Passport requirements should also be determined as the vast majority of countries require a valid passport for at least 6 months after arrival date. As discussed earlier, proof of yellow fever vaccination is required at the border in many countries even when transferring planes in certain circumstances.

Travel Advisories and Warnings:
In similar fashion to health advisories, travel safety advisories can be found by reviewing country information on the Department of Foreign Affairs and International trade website. DFAIT website is provided in the additional resources section.

Registering at a Canadian Embassy:
Travelers of any kind should strongly consider registering online with the Registration of Canadians Abroad (ROCA) before travel. The website is provided in the additional resources section. On arrival one may also consider registering in person at the Canadian embassy or consulate in the country of destination.

Protecting Your Valuables:
In addition to keeping your valuables in a safe location, it is important that you make copies of your passport, credit card/ bank card, identification card, travel documents, and airline tickets in case of loss or theft. A copy can be left in a safe location at home while another can be taken with you (separate from the original documents). If traveling in a group, you may want to keep a copy of your colleagues’, shall one of you become separated or lost.

Apart from key identification documents, other valuables to keep safe include: traveler’s cheques, money, and health insurance cards.

Finally, a detailed emergency contact list should be created with names and contact information for contacts at your destination and at home. A copy of such a list should also be made. You may also want to keep a copy of your traveling partner’s emergency contact list in case of separation. As much as possible try to ensure that someone at home has a rough estimation of where you will be at all times.

Emergency Preparedness:
Students should prepare a list of emergency contacts in Canada and, if possible also a list of contacts at their placement destination.
Orientation upon Arrival:
This orientation is intended to provide you the basic information for traveling abroad. Nonetheless, it is important to do your own research prior to departure in order to have knowledge of local laws and customs, currency and modes of exchange, transportation options (for example to and from airport), and housing arrangements. Also, ensure that you have a contact number for a designate preceptor at your destination in case of unexpected changes to travel itinerary.

Additional Resources:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Canada (DFAIT) Country Reports – provides information on travel safety for specific countries - http://www.voyage.gc.ca/
- Travel Site - http://travel.state.gov
- Registration of Canadians Abroad (ROCA) -https://www.travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration

Notes:
Section 3: Cultural Competency

Cultural proficiency is an essential component for personal and patient safety in diverse populations of heterogeneous race, ethnicity, customs, and primary language. In this session we will cover cultural sensitivity from various perspectives. However, it is important to familiarize yourself with this very important concept, and as such further resources are provided at the conclusion of this section. In addition to societal and cultural differences, it is also important to have a basic understanding of the medical culture in your host country, as it may be immensely different from that here in Canada. If possible, contacting people whom have worked in the same area/country can be a superb resource as it will give you a firsthand account of how that particular medical and social system functions.

Important question to research pre-departure include:
1. What is/are the spoken languages? Learn some simple phrases such as “hello” and “thank you”. You may also want to learn some basic medical terms in the local language.
2. What is the history of the country and how does this affect its status today?
3. What is the current political situation? Are there any dangerous areas that you should avoid?
4. Do Canadians/foreigners have a good/bad reputation in the area that you will be staying in? What are the reasons?
5. What is customary dining etiquette? Greeting etiquette? Etiquette surrounding business?
6. What are the norms of male/female relations?
7. What is the cultural perspective on privacy? Personal space?
8. What is the accepted form of dress? What is appropriate for casual/formal situations?
9. Are there any religious customs that you should be aware of?
10. When are the national, local holidays? What are the significance of these days?
11. Are there special rituals, customs to observe when entering government buildings? Places of worship?

Why is Cultural Competency Important?

A. Culture influences people’s view of health, illness, and treatment - all humans have been socialized from a young age to define various experiences and interactions in ways that are similar to the group in which they associate. Such experiences of the world are viewed in light of concepts, rules, behaviours, and meanings based on the ways people interact with each other, to the supernatural and to their environment. Nevertheless, it is important to also consider that no single individual is a repository for his or her entire cultural group and that not all members act in exactly the same ways. Thus, in the healthcare setting it is important to avoid pre-assumptions based on the patient's participation in a particular cultural group.

B. Patient-centered care includes culturally competent care - One must always consider the distinction between disease and illness. In contrast to health professionals, who often categorize symptomatology on the basis of the bio- scientific model, patients focus on the experience of illness. The patient-centered approach recognizes the bio-psycho- social approach to health care delivery as a means of keeping human dimensions at the center of the medical interaction. Addressing such things as cultural beliefs, values, and expectations and incorporating family and community into the therapeutic process ultimately improves health care outcome.
C. Differences in concepts of bodily function - Different cultures have different internally consistent philosophies about how the body functions normally and how and why such system may lead to dysfunction. Such systems of beliefs may incorporate any or all of the natural, supernatural, or social worlds.

natural - connections between people and the Earth's elements

social - ideas about appropriate connections between people of different ages, genders, lineages, and ethnic groups

supernatural - includes religious beliefs about life, death, afterlife, souls, spirits, and the interaction between human and spiritual worlds

D. Differences in classification of disease - differences in ways to categorize disease may present problems in translation of words and ideas and between systems of disease.

E. Theories of disease causation

F. Treatment options - one must consider the various treatment methods according to different cultures and societies. Use of complimentary medicine and its applications is also of appreciable consideration.

G. Medical Decision Making - this includes both how a person chooses a healer and subsequently how they decide to interpret such healer's advice.

How to provide culturally competent medical care?

A. Learn about yourself as a cultural being - medical professionals need to understand how their personal and cultural backgrounds influence their views and beliefs about health, disease, and treatment and also how it affects their interaction with others.

B. Learn about patients as cultural beings- as a medical provider, important things to familiarize yourself with are: historical events, migration, refugee movement, social and familial structures and influences, religious beliefs and practices, use of complimentary and alternative medicine, and expectations of life-cycle events.

C. Learn culturally appropriate communication skills - adaptation of interviewing skills may be necessary to better accommodate people whom are used to communicating in different manners.

D. Apply cultural information and skills in clinical interactions - listen to patients perspectives, explain medical views, acknowledge similarities, recommend a course of action, and negotiate plans.
Questions for exploring cultural explanatory models:

1. What do you call your problem?
2. What do you think has caused your problem?
3. Why do you think it started when it did?
4. What does your sickness do to you?
5. How severe is it? Will it have a long or short course?
6. What do you fear most about your sickness?
7. What chief problems has your sickness caused for you?
8. What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?

Core Readings:


Additional Readings:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Centre for Intercultural Learning – check out the “Country Insights” for cultural information on the country you are visiting - http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cfsi-icse/cil-cai/

Notes:
Section 4 – Language Competency

Language forms the basis of the medical encounter and is essential in creating a trusting patient-health care provider relationship. Ideally, one should have basic proficiency in the language, which is used in the host country. However, this is not always possible. Thus, it is important to make an effort both pre-departure and during your travels to learn basic elements of the local language. Also, one must be prepared to work with an interpreter if need be.

Recommendations for working with interpreters:

1. Greet patients in their language.
2. Introduce self and everyone present.
3. Arrange seats in a triangle and address patient directly.
4. Speak clearly in a normal voice.
5. Use common terms and simple language structure.
6. Express one idea at a time and pause for interpretations.
7. Expect interpreter to use first person singular, verbatim translation.
8. Consider multiple meanings to nonverbal gestures.
9. Ask the same question in different ways if it gets inconsistent or unconnected responses.
10. Ask interpreter to explain issues, but do not place them in the middle of conflicts.

Language Basics:

Be aware that the local language may be different from the official language. Also be aware that the language in which healthcare professionals communicate may be different from the local language. Foremost, be aware of the language expectations of your hosts.

Notes:
Section 5 – Ethical Considerations

Challenges faced when working and learning abroad are often different from those faced in Canada. Before departure, it is important to clearly identify your goals and expectations for participating in global health fieldwork. Also, one must delineate the ethical considerations of studying and/or participating in health care delivery in low-resource settings. Lastly, it is important to realize the dangers of learning new procedures or practices that are beyond your level of training. Appropriate supervision must be sought in the same manner, as it would be at your home institution.

Questions For Students Prior to Global Health Work:

1. Why do you hope to do this work?
2. What are your personal and structural, short and long-term objectives?
3. What are the benefits and who will receive them, and what are the costs, and who will bear them?
4. In the context of very limited resources for global health needs, is your elective justified? What exists close-by?
5. What do you need to do to prepare for your elective, both practical and personal?
6. Where are the weaknesses in your plan, specifically?
7. Is the work feasible, cost-effective, necessary, focused, and justified?
8. Will it work to undermine disparity, or actually contribute to it? Will there be a net benefit to the community?
9. What do you hope to bring back to your community, and whom will you share it with?
10. Is your work sustainable, and if not, will this leave a negative impact?

Core readings:

Additional Resources:
- EISEL – The Ethics of International Engagement and Service-Learning Project at UBC offers a number of online resources for exploring the ethics of international service learning projects www.ethicsofisl.ubc.ca
Core Articles on Ethics in International Electives:

Global Health Ethics For Students by Andrew D. Pinto AND Ross E.G. Upshur
Developing World Bioethics
ISSN 1471-8731 (print); 1471-8847 (online) doi:10.1111/j.
1471-8847.2007.00209.x Volume 9 Number 1 2009 pp 1–10

ABSTRACT

As a result of increased interest in global health, more and more medical students and trainees from the ‘developed world’ are working and studying in the ‘developing world’. However, while opportunities to do this important work increase, there has been insufficient development of ethical guidelines for students. It is often assumed that ethics training in developed world situations is applicable to health experiences globally. However, fundamental differences in both clinical and research settings necessitate an alternative paradigm of analysis. This article is intended for teachers who are responsible for preparing students prior to such experiences. A review of major ethical issues is presented, how they pertain to students, and a framework is outlined to help guide students in their work.

The Ethics of Short-Term International Health Electives in Developing Countries
By Lani K. Ackerman, M.D
by the Association for the Behavioral Sciences and Medical Education 1075-1211/10

ABSTRACT

With increased globalization, and a desire by educators to develop culturally competent, compassionate physicians, there has been an exponential increase in the number of medical students involved in International Health Electives (IHE). Evaluation of many of these experiences is strongly positive for the students, but there has been virtually no academic assessment of the impact - positive or negative - on the host community. The ethics of affecting locals, frequently a vulnerable population or community utilized for training, as well as the ethics of physical or emotional harm to the students have not been carefully examined. This article details some of the ethical issues that must be considered in establishing or continuing rotations for medical students in developing countries, reviews the data in the current medical literature related to these issues, and ends with recommendations for educators in the ethical development and evaluation of international health electives.