A Crash Guide for Organizing and Preparing for Your International Experience

By

Ob/Gyn Residents, University of Alberta, 2013

**Host University/Hospital**: First find a University/Hospital/Preceptor to agree to take you, and fill out their necessary paperwork. They may need a letter of support from our Program Director, letter of intent, copy of your MD, LMCC results, CV, etc. Our residency program administrator will need a name/contact information to create an evaluation for the preceptor to fill out at the end of the elective. See the electives database for some sites that previous Residents have been to.

**Approvals**: Start early! They include our Residency Program and the office of

PGME who will issue a certificate of insurance (note that they can deny electives to regions they consider unsafe). Fill out the PGME International Elective Form (see link below), our Program Director will also need to sign it and then it will be faxed to Barb Haegel. It requires at least 3 months advance notice

http://www.med.ualberta.ca/-/media/medicine/PME/Form/outgoing\_elective.pdf

http://www.med.ualberta.ca/programs/residency/resources/electives

**Visa:** check with your respective embassy well ahead of time regarding whether you obtain a VISA before you leave (and if it counts as used from the time you receive it) or if you obtain it at the airport and what you need to obtain one (passport photos, copies of itineraries, letter showing you are there to study etc). They can be very detail oriented, ensure you have at least a "student" one and not just a tourist one in most places. You may require letterhead from the Program Director and/or destination University and documents like previous bank statements. It varies greatly so you will need to check based the location you are travelling to. The US apparently only requires a visa if your elective is a longer one, depending on the state. You may need a letter from host US University explaining that you do not need a visa to show at the border.

**Temporary Medical License**: the application process varies by country (and some may not have such a system) and by state in the US. Applications may require forms filled out by the CPSA, the medical school you graduated from, our Program Director, as well as certificate of completion of 'child abuse reporting' online seminar, and LMCC results.

**Insurance - Liability**: The CMPA does not cover out of country endeavours - see “potential gap in liability protection when teaching or learning outside Canada”, published in 2009. University Insurance only covers basic insurance and not malpractice coverage. Private malpractice coverage is available to purchase, one such company is: [www.academicins.com](http://www.academicins.com). It may be fairly expensive.

**Insurance - Personal Medical/Health:** Call Alberta Blue Cross to see if you need to extend your emergency medical coverage for the period you are away. Usually you have 30 days emergency medical coverage via your PARA health benefits- confirm these details with Alberta Blue Cross.

**Accommodation:** Usually the host university will have recommendations, ensure safety as a priority.

**Funding:** Funding is pretty limited unfortunately. See below.

· The AMA did not have anything available when approached in 2012

· The SOGC has annual grant, details are on their webpage and take note of deadlines. - [www.iwhp.sogc.org](http://www.iwhp.sogc.org). The SOGC also has an elective program for international work for which they select applicants every year, see link below:-<http://iwhp.sogc.org/index.php?page=junior-member-elective-grant-in-international-womens-health-millennium-fellowship&hl=en_US>

· See also Creative Funding Guide for International Electives, put together by AMSA, medical student focused but has some helpful information:<http://hsc.unm.edu/som/programs/globalhealth/docs/CreativeFundingInternationalHealthElectives.pdf>

· Lee Global Education Awards (through U of A Global Education) -- You may be eligible if you are 30 years of age or younger and have been selected to participate in an international learning experience related to international development. The deadline to apply is generally in March. <http://globaled.ualberta.ca/FundingOpportunities.aspx>

**Vaccinations:** Some options on where to obtain counseling/have vaccines administered are noted below. Be aware, it can be very expensive so save some money for this as most vaccines are not covered (you may be able to submit a claim through your supplementary health account though). All clinics will also have a consultation fee, inquire as to whether this will be charged again if you need subsequent visits for vaccine administration.

AHS Travel Clinic:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=saf&rid=1064914>

Tel: 780-735-0100

Fax: 780-735-0101

Note: they can also provide you with a PEP prescription and info. Call them really far in advance to book your appointment.

University Health Center:

<http://www.uhc.ualberta.ca>

Note: you need to have paid PGME fees for health services to access the UHC.

ATLAS Immunizations:

<http://atlasimmunization.com>

Note: although it is a privately run company in contrary to those listed above, it does have convenient hours for crazy schedules.

**Medications/Supplies:**

· It is a good idea to check into the need for antimalarials, HIV PEP. Regarding HIV PEP see AHS clinic note or else AHS ID Physician Dr Stan Houston has been very helpful about assisting with prescriptions; it is expensive to obtain the five day starter pack to take with you but worth it if there is a chance you cannot access them overseas if you need them.

· If diarrheal illness is a possibility take loperamide with you and obtain a prescription for ciprofloxacin or another appropriate antibiotic to take with you as medications may not readily be available or they may be counterfeit depending where you are.

· Additional information on what to take is available in guide books like Lonely Planet. Your kit may include: acetaminophen, paper tape, antibacterial ointment, antihistamines, antinauseants, ibuprofen, bandages, gauze, DEET insect repellant, iodine tablets or water purification system (note: MEC has a number of different options), oral rehydration salts, insect sprayed mosquito bed net, pocket knife, scissors, safety pins, tweezers, sterile needles/syringes/fluids, hydrocortisone/anti-itch cream, sunblock, thermometer.

· Note that you should also consider whether you need any additional supplies to participate in your elective - for instance do you need disposable gloves, sterile gloves (they may have them but if you need a less common size then consider that), masks, hand sanitizer, alcohol swabs etc. There is a store in the city that will give you a discount if you work in health care and show your ID, there may be other stores that offer discounts as well: HealthCare Solutions 5405 99 Street, 780-434-3131.

**Objectives:** Think about setting objectives for your elective and running them by your preceptor ahead of time so you know what is feasible and what you can focus on.

**Resources:** There are tons of resources online for preparing for international travel and in no particular order they include those listed below. Be prepared that as with all aspects of training in medicine you may experience challenging ethical and medical situations, some are common to any experience and some may be unique to global health work. Ensure that you have adequate support and access to debriefing if you need it.

· <http://www.cma.ca/trainingresources>

·  [www.humanitarianhealthethics.net](http://www.humanitarianhealthethics.net)

· Video - First Do No Harm: A Qualitative Research Documentary<http://vimeo.com//22008886>

· Video - They Come In The Name of Helping

[www.baibureh.org](http://www.baibureh.org)

·  [www.humanitarianhealthethics.net](http://www.humanitarianhealthethics.net)

·  [www.globalhealtheducation.org](http://www.globalhealtheducation.org)

· <http://cirrhken.ca/eLearning>

· Ethical Issues Encountered by Medical Student During International Health Electives. Med Educ 2011 45(7): 704-711. Elit et al.

· Ethical Dilemmas in Global Clinical Electives:<http://www.ghjournal.org/jgh-print/spring-2011-issue/ethical-dilemmas-in-global-clinical-electives/>

· EIESL Project via UBC:<http://blogs.ubc.ca/ethicsofisl/about/>

·  [www.globaled.ualberta.ca](http://www.globaled.ualberta.ca) might also have some helpful information on preparing for travel

· The Office of Global Health at the University of Alberta has pre-departure training for medical students and other resources that may be helpful to you as a Resident, including potentially knowing of other medical trainees going to the same areas as you or those who have recently returned. Dr David Zakus - zakus@ualberta.ca and assistant Ms Cheryl Knowles - cherylknowles@med.ualberta.ca are based in the Division of Community Engagement, Dept of Medicine, Tel: 780-492-8928. <http://www.facebook.com/#!/uofaglobalhealthcommunity>

· Annual conference based out of Harvard in Boston: Global Health in Obstetrics and Gynecology [www.cme.harvard.edu](http://www.cme.harvard.edu)

· American Medical Association - Resident International Health Opportunities. You need to be a member to access these resources.

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/member-groups-sections/resident-fellow-section/rfs-resources/international-residency-opportunities.page>

· APGO reportedly has a document for medical students but links are broken right now: [www.apgo.org](http://www.apgo.org)

· CFMS International Electives Database - pending but many other helpful resources there too:<http://www.cfms.org/index.php/global-health/resources-a-tools.html>