

### Purpose of Presentation

- Discuss motivations, tolerances, and desired outcomes for international medical experiences
- Present a preparation schedule
- Anticipate stress points and how to deal with them
  - List resources for additional information

#### Review Your Motivations

- See the world and experience other cultures
- Develop communication skills using interpreters and foreign languages
- Enhance medical skills while helping the needy
- Treat illnesses and surgical problems uncommon in the U.S.
- Practice in a simpler and more gratifying setting
  - Get a new perspective on U.S. medical issues
- Find purpose and spiritual fulfillment

### Consider Your Tolerance Level for:

- Travel uncertainties and risks
- Uncomfortable living conditions
- Unaccustomed foods and cultural expectations
- Disease and injury exposure
- Frustration about limited ability to help
- Diagnosing and treating based on limited information

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- Self understanding of tolerance levels
- New skills and knowledge
- Academic credit
- Satisfaction that you can perform in exotic settings
- Direction for future learning emphases
- Experience level that opens doors for further opportunities

## Deciding Where to Go

- Match you interests, goals and personal creed
  - Clinical setting, local language, type of organization
- Determine your budgetary and time constraints
- Explore the internet and medical school resources
- Seek out someone who has been there recently
- Learn expectations for your work and free time
   Understand the principles and policies of the organization

## Deciding When to Go

- Better later in your training to be given more responsibility
- Chose the best season for the location
- Ask about anticipated personnel changes
- Anticipate potential disruptions and political instability
- Get the details about costs and payment dates
  - Confirm local travel opportunities

# 12 Months or More Before Leaving

- Investigate options for suitable experiences and funding
- Recruit student partners
- Schedule the elective time
- Apply for funding support
- Apply for a position on the trip

## 6 Months Before Leaving

- Finalize choice of venue
- Undergo a health review and examination
- Determine needed immunizations and begin series
  - CDC recommendations: http://www.cdc.gov/travel
  - Local health department vs student health
- Emphasize language studies
  - Dialog with someone who's worked there

## 3 Months Before Leaving

- Apply for passport (and visa?)
- Plan itinerary and buy travel tickets
- Request medication donations
- Learn to work with an interpreter
- Attend team preparation meetings
- Study the host country's history and geography
  - Develop knowledge of their cultural mores

## 1 Month Before Leaving

- Make arrangements to maintain your home life
  - Pet care, bill payments, house sitting, etc
- Prepare for resumption of academic duties when returning
  - Anticipate fatigue and reverse culture shock
- Confirm what you are expected to bring (e.g. professional tools)
  - Purchase trip specific items
    - Luggage, locks, fasteners, etc.

## Personal Care and Hygiene

- Climate and custom appropriate clothes
- Comfortable shoes and sandals
- Rain jacket, swimming suit
- Toilet paper, laxative
- Toiletry items, plastic bags
- Towel and washcloth

#### Illness Prevention Items

- Antiseptic hand cleanser
- Insect repellant, mosquito netting
- Sun Screen, lip balm, hat
- Water purification tablets or filter
- Malaria prophylaxis medication

#### Items for Personal Medical Kit

- Band-Aids, gauze and tape
- Scissors, tweezers, safety pins
- Mole skin, felt pads, superglue
- Adrenaline and phenergan for injection
- 3cc syringe with 1inch 25 G needle

Antibiotic, steroid and antifungal creams and drops

### Medications for Personal Medical Kit

- Diarrhea treatment (quinolone, Pepto Bismol, Imodium)
- Pain medications (acetaminophen, NSAIDS)
- Respiratory treatments (decongestants, antihistamines, etc)
- Altitude sickness prophylaxis (acetazolamide)
- Motion sickness treatment (meclizine, scopalamine, etc)
- Personal chronic and rescue medications

#### Comfort Items

- Pillow, sheets, sleeping bag, tent
- Ear plugs, blind fold
- Extra glasses, sun glasses, contacts supplies
- Personal music, batteries
- Snacks, chewing gum
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Personal journal, books

#### Professional Tools

- Electronic thermometer & covers
- Stethoscope and BP cuff
- OtoOptho exam kit
- Mini-reference books or PDA
- Latex gloves of your size
- Camera, watch
- Copy of credentials

## 1 to 2 Week Before Leaving

- Begin packing to discover needed items (plan to travel light)
- List trip itinerary, contact numbers and back-up plan details and give copies to U.S. contacts
- Gather and repack meds and items to be donated
- Review luggage restrictions and items not permitted.
- Replenish travel medical kit

## Night Before Leaving

- Try to get a good night's rest
  - Finish packing early
  - Avoid alcohol and stimulants
- Confirm flight times
- Have travel clothes, tickets, and passport laid out
- Allow ample time to reach airport

#### Stress Points

- Communication difficulties
- Trip itinerary changes
- Connections in country
- Financial issues
- Personal safety risks
- Illness complications

# Communication Stresses During Travel

- Know how to communicate with home and destination people
  - To notify about schedule changes
  - To announce safe arrival
- Have phone numbers of alternate contacts
  - Carry info on how to use local phone system
- Know location of destination and home addresses of contacts
- Travel with language support materials or people

# Communication Stresses During Clinics

- Be realistic about your communication abilities
- Discuss with interpreters the preferred mode of working together
  - Ask for info on cultural factors, home remedies and alternative practitioners
- Be willing to help wherever needed
- Limit constructive criticism
- Be open to the recommendations of experienced clinicians

## Connection Complications in Country

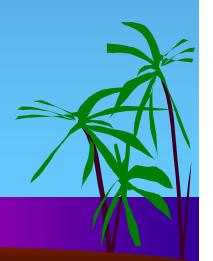
- Know how to make contact if not met at the airport (Have phone numbers and coins)
- Have a back-up plan
  - For transportation, e.g.. Bus station location and schedules
  - For lodging, list of hotels
- Bring some local cash in case exchange locations aren't open

#### Financial issues

- Learn beforehand the best methods to get local cash at a good rate
  - Travelers checks and credit cards may not be accepted
- Carry financial items in 2 or 3 places
   wallet (petty cash)
   money belt (large bills)
   neck and/or belt pouch (passport, exit fees, tickets, bank and credit cards)

#### Financial issues

- Have a copy of your passport, insurance info, credentials and itinerary in separate locations from originals
- Carry a calculator to determine fair exchanges
- Don't pack valuables in check-in luggage

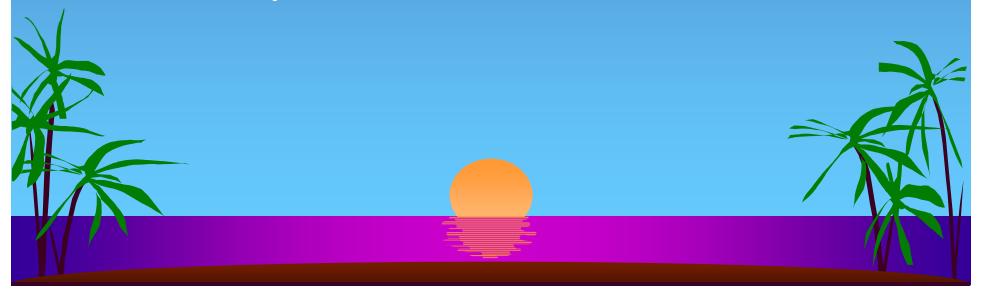


### Personal safety risks

- Stay alert for dangers
- Know the rules to avoid danger
  - Use the buddy system
  - Avoid danger areas and times
  - Don't flaunt money or valuables
- Protect against sexual misadventures
- Call out early for help
- Don't fight to protect what can be replaced

## Illness Complications

- Anticipate exposures that make you ill
- Avoid risky activities
- Always carry your travel medical kit
- Know the best sources of in-country medical care
- Carry travel and evacuation insurance



#### After You Return

- Expect reverse culture shock
- Take advantage of debriefing opportunities
- Plan enough time for rest and reflection
- Have a party with those who've had similar experiences
- Give constructive feedback to advisors and rotation planners

## Resources for Medical Electives

- Search the GHEC site (<u>http://www.globalhealth-ec.org</u>) for the following topics:
  - Health Preparation (includes more detailed Travel Kit list)
  - Safety Abroad
  - Liability and Ethical Issues
- Health Serve (UK):

http://www.healthserve.org/electives/preparing/medic al elective

Website of the sponsoring institution

## General Resources for Travel Information

- CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/travel
- U.S. Dept of State: http://www.state.gov
- Library of Congress Country Studies: http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs
- CIA World Fact Book: http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/fact book
- Lonely Planet: http://www.lonelyplanet.com