

ORIENTATION PACKET for INTERNATIONAL ELECTIVES

Please read all the way through this orientation/preparation document. The more you know and the better prepared you are, the more you will get out of your experience. Be ready to work, to not always have everything you are used to (warm showers, beds, specific foods, etc.), and to be flexible. In return, you will have the opportunity to learn new things about medicine, about working in conditions with limited resources, and about how we can be agents of change in improving emergency care and public health for patients around the world.

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1. **Country Information**

Before you travel to the country of your international elective, read something about it! Learn about its history, language, currency, politics, and geography. Learn about the clinic/hospital where you will be rotating. Have an idea of the context you are going to be working in and what your surroundings will be like. **It is very important to find out about the local customs and cultural norms.** You will have a much better experience and avoid potential bad/uncomfortable/dangerous situations if you understand how people live in the place where you are going and can be respectful of that.

You may also want to read about travel restrictions to the country you are visiting. The U.S. government has recommendations/restrictions for travel to certain countries based on current political and other conditions. You can find this information at:

<http://travel.state.gov/travel/>

**** IMPORTANT: Find out if you need a Visa for the country you are visiting! And make sure your passport is not expired!!**

2. **Vaccinations and Medications**

STAY HEALTHY AND BE SAFE!!

Learn about what vaccines and prophylaxis medications are recommended for travel to the country you are visiting. Some countries even REQUIRE that you have proof of certain vaccines. You can find this information at:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

Travel medicine clinics

The Employee Health at Downstate provides most vaccines. Check with them first. Otherwise, the following website has a list of travel medicine clinics in NYC (all Manhattan). The rates for vaccination seem to be standard, but the cost for consultation may vary. None of these have walk-in appts, but some have same day appts.

<http://www.travmed.com/clinics>

Medications

Strongly consider bringing:

- Ciprofloxacin or other antibiotics for travelers' diarrhea
- Loperamide (Imodium)
- Motrin/Tylenol
- Zofran/Reglan
- Antacids
- You may consider taking HIV prophylaxis meds, in case of a needle-stick or other blood exposure

Pack personal medication in carry-on luggage just in case of bags being lost. Pack enough for two weeks in the event of an emergency. Also, bring an extra pair of contacts or eyeglasses.

3. Things to Bring

Pack lightly. Consider that you may not be traveling around in a taxi or a car. If your suitcase/backpack is too heavy to carry, you might want to take some things out.

- *Leave a photocopy of your passport in the states and bring an extra one with you
- *~\$500 in cash (there may be no ATM's and emergencies do occur)
- *Camera
- *Copy of your US/NY medical license (if you have one)
- *Extra batteries
- *Sun glasses and sunscreen, hat if desired
- *Plastic bags/Ziplock baggies (always useful)
- *Rain jacket/poncho
- *Umbrella (optional)
- *Journal/small notebook (important to write about your experience and to take notes)
- *Insect repellent with deet and maybe a mosquito net.
- *Towel/wash cloth. Consider also taking hygienic wipes (sometimes showers don't work)
- *A roll of toilet paper (again, not everything is always available and some countries don't use toilet paper at all)
- *Toiletries (Shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc)
- *Scrubs or other light clothing
- *Comfortable shoes
- *Non perishable snacks i.e. energy bars, trail mix etc. (always good to have a stock in case you don't have food when you want it or if you are sick and don't want to eat the local food)
- *Books to read
- *Cell phones – check with your service if you can get international access or buy an international SIM card or rent a phone at the airport when you get to your destination (won't be available everywhere but a possible option)
- *Small flashlight
- *Pen/paper
- *Water bottle (sometimes good if you can get access to clean water and keep it filled)
- *Medicine references - Harriet Lane, Sanford, Quick EM references, DermAtlas may all come in handy. You will be seeing medications with names you don't recognize, as well as new pathology you aren't used to seeing.
- *Personal hand sanitizer
- *Box/bag of latex gloves
- *Stethoscope
- *Trauma shears
- *Smaller backpack/fannypack to bring to/from work

4. Evacuation Insurance

It is a good idea to get evacuation insurance in the event of an injury or medical problem where you might want to be treated OUTSIDE of the country you are visiting (the evacuation insurance will arrange transport and even air ambulance, as may be needed). You can do this through the trip insurance on your flight (Allianz is the one that American Airlines uses). This is the cheapest way. Other providers are Medex Assist and International SOS.

Downstate and KCH don't cover us for this. Your medical insurance companies MIGHT but often not (if you want to check, please do so though). Your medical insurance, however, SHOULD cover your emergency expenses, even abroad (usually). If you want to ADD medical insurance to the evacuation insurance policy, that is an option, for a little more money.

5. Important Pre-Trip Knowledge

In many foreign countries, you may encounter extremely stressful situations, such as witnessing extreme poverty, tremendous loss of life, serious injuries, disrupted families, and difficult daily life circumstances or even civil unrest. You may see people begging for food and money, be prepared to have to manage that situation. You may not be completely prepared for what you are going to experience, but this is part of your learning and part of doing an international elective! It provides an opportunity for your personal growth and to better understand of how others experience life. However, it is also important to recognize that these experiences may cause you stress and even psychological or emotional difficulties. Use your journal to reflect on these feelings, use your support network to talk about it by email or phone, and you can *always* call or email Christina or Rob or Bonnie if you need help, have questions or concerns, or if you just want to chat.

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HAVE A GREAT TRIP!!!!