

Questions to Consider in Choosing an International Elective Site

- 1) Ethical Questions to Consider
 - a. What are my motivations? Why do you hope to do this work? What are your objectives (both personal and structural) in short and long-term?
 - b. What are the benefits (and who will receive them)? What are the costs (and who will bear them)? In the context of limited resources, is your elective justified?
 - c. Will my work undermine a disparity or contribute to it? What will be my impact on patients? Other healthcare providers?
 - d. When we don't have the answers for communities in need, how will I respond?
 - e. Is your work sustainable, and if not, will this leave a negative impact?

- 2) Personal attributes essential for international work
 - Flexibility, humility, sense of humor
 - Are you adventurous, adaptable, and self-confident but with knowledge of limits?
 - Have you considered your tolerance for:
 - Travel uncertainties/risks/costs
 - Uncomfortable living conditions
 - Theft risk
 - Challenging cultural expectations
 - Disease/injury exposure
 - Frustrations about inability to help

- 3) Identify what broad scope of global health opportunities interest you.
 - a. Clinical vs. research vs. education vs. public health vs. advocacy
 - b. Rural vs. urban
 - c. Inpatient vs. outpatient
 - d. Public hospital vs. private
 - e. Individual vs. group project
 - f. New vs. established program
 - g. Costs of rotation
 - h. Are you looking to establish a career in global health?
 - i. Are you looking to build sustainability in a project?
 - j. How much supervision is required?
 - k. What do you hope to bring back to your community from this experience and who will you share it with?

- 4) Identify length of rotation and when you will go.

- 5) -Is there a country or locale you would like to be in?
 - Are there special language requirements?
 - Is travel distance from the U.S. an issue?
 - How stable and safe is the location

- 6) -Are there any special needs or requirements (i.e electricity if doing benchtop research)?
 -Do you need to consider travel for spouse/children?
 -Do you have any specific health needs (i.e. DM1 and need for refrigeration)?
- 7) Organization-specific questions
- a) What is the organization's long-term goal? Who determined that goal?
 - b) How has the organization come to be in this community? What conditions make it necessary for them to exist in the first place?
 - c) Who has volunteered there in the past? Evaluation of their experience?
 - d) How does the international community perceive this organization?
<https://www.guidestar.org/search>
 - e) What is the expected role of the student in the experience? (i.e. shadowing vs. direct patient care, caring for children and/or adults, work hours, etc.)
 -Responsibilities should be clarified with site director prior to arrival
 - f) Who is organizing the experience?
 - g) How long have they been involved in the community/location?
 - h) Is this a profit or non-profit? Religious or government affiliation?
 - i) What type of preparation, in-country support, and post-exposure debriefing is provided?
 - j) Will there be a preceptor on-site for the entire elective? Will there be access to interpreters?
 - k) If students are paying a fee, is the use of fees transparent and are there appropriate fiduciary practices by the organization?
 - l) How are student activities linked with long-term reciprocal gains for the community?
 - m) What cultural, economic, or political barriers might affect your elective?
 - n) What are the clinical resources for the site? (lab, radiology, pharmacy, ICU, specialists, etc.)
 - o) What are the common diagnoses and medical problems at the site?
 - p) What are the logistics for the site? (dress code, accommodations, internet, transportation, food, water, safety)?

Seven Sins of Humanitarian Medicine

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20063094>

Sin 1: Leaving a mess behind

Sin 2: Failing to match technology to local needs and abilities

Sin 3: Failing of NGOs to cooperate and help each other

Sin 4: Failing to have a follow-up plan

Sin 5: Allowing politics, training, or other distracting goals to trump service, while representing the mission as "service"

Sin 6: Going where we are not wanted or needed and/or being poor guests

Sin 7: Doing the right thing for the wrong reason

References:

APPD Global Health Content.

Arya A. Preparing for International Health Experiences: A Practical Guide.

Pinto A and R Upshur. Global Health Ethics for Students. Developing World Bioethics. 2007.