

International Health Experiences during Residency and Beyond: UCSF Pediatrics Guide

Updated 7/5/06 by Kevin Clarke

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Doing an international elective during residency is a great opportunity to experience other cultures, network for a career in global health or simply expand your knowledge of pediatric medicine. However, it does take smart planning well in advance of your elective block. Below is a guide to help you navigate that process.

Overview

- Why do you want to do an International Health Elective?
- Why now during your residency and how will this effect your career decisions?
- What are your goals for doing an elective?
- What do you propose to do and why?
- Who will be your proposed preceptor at your elective site?
- Who will be your UCSF Pediatrics faculty preceptor?
- Where would you like to work? In what country?
- What setting? Urban (may or may not be tertiary), District level ("community hospital"),
 - Health Center, Rural or village health clinic, Community health worker, Mobile medical team, Refugee setting, Conflict area
- What type of elective? Clinical, Community or public health elective - identify a community health need and implement it.
- Research elective
- Is this an elective you can self-design or is it an established, organized elective?
- What will you be able to contribute?

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Working Conditions

- What is your work schedule?
- How many and at what kinds of facilities will you be expected to work at?
- How far are the sites from your living quarters?
- Who pays for and arranges transportation?
- Are electricity and uncontaminated water available?
- What kind of medical equipment is available?
- How many patients will you see per day?
- Will you have time off?
- What kinds of laboratory, diagnostic, referral, and consultation options are available?
- What kind of training has the support staff and your colleagues had?
- In what language will you communicate and keep medical records?
- Are interpreters available?
- If language training is required, who will pay for it? When will it take place?

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Living Conditions

- What weather conditions and insect or animal hazards can you expect to contend with? Where will you live? Who will pay for room and board?
- Will you have sufficient privacy and security?
- Will you have access to electricity, sanitation facilities, uncontaminated food and water?
- Are there significant road safety or other transportation hazards?
- Is it feasible to bring along your family or a partner to whom you are not married?
- Are there recreational opportunities?

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Documentation and Licensing

Are a passport, visa, vaccination certificate, local work permit or even local medical license required? Are customs documents required for medical supplies or household goods that you may be taking along? Will your sponsoring organization assist with the paperwork? Will you be signing a formal contract for your services?

Visit the U.S. Department of State website (www.state.gov) and click on *Travel* to do your research.

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Insurance

Will your current health, disability and life insurance policies cover travel and service overseas? Does your sponsoring organization provide any coverage? What malpractice insurance (if any) is required or recommended? Is there a medical evacuation plan? For medical and evacuations insurance SOS www.internationalsos.com, www.worldtravelcenter.com, www.highway2health.com, www.alltripinsurance.com.

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Personal Health

What immunizations are recommended? Are malaria prophylaxis and mosquito nets needed? Travel clinics such as Passport Health with Joseph Habis, MD, Medical Director, 350 Parnassus Avenue Suite 501 (415) 461-2866 can provide the necessary prescriptions, vaccinations, and advice. Other travel clinics in San Francisco: www.sfhomecare.com, [Michael J. Reid, MD](http://www.michaeljreid.com) or (415) 788-4128, [Leo Van der Reis, MD](http://www.leovan.derreis.com) or (415) 661-8865. Also check the [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov) website, specifically the yellow book for traveler health information.

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Communication

How can you communicate with your family and sponsoring organization back home--mail, telephone, e-mail, fax, HAM radio, etc.? This may be a crucial educational link between you and your UCSF elective advisor. Ask how reliable the communication lines are.

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In Case of Trouble

What are the safety and security issues (accidents, crime, disease, political unrest)? What steps have been taken to minimize risk and respond to problems? What help can you expect from your own country and/or local authorities in the event of difficulties? Have you left a detailed itinerary and other information (regarding passports, credit cards, travelers' checks) with a trustworthy individual? Find out about safety at the State Department's website travel.state.gov and consider registering with the U.S. Embassy in the destination country. Local consular officials tend to have the most recent information and specific travel warnings.

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Culture

- Which customs, taboos, and religious or cultural practices will affect you, both on and off duty (body language, dress, dietary or alcohol restrictions, differing concepts of modesty)? For example, in some Muslim societies it is offensive to use the left hand for gesturing or for men to shake hands with unfamiliar women.
- Have you considered how you might react to culture shock, homesickness, anti-foreigner sentiment, suspicion, or ingratitude for your services?
- What are the main health beliefs of the patient population?
- What are the main health problems? For population statistics access www.prb.org
- How do people view physicians as opposed to other healthcare providers?
- Is medicine practiced in a paternalistic way?

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Preparing before you go

The AAP Section on International Child Health has an excellent website to help you prepare for your trip. Residents are welcome to join and will benefit from additional resource materials. For any questions, you may contact Kevin Clarke (clarkek@peds.ucsf.edu).

AAP SOICH <http://www.aap.org/sections/ich/respreparation.htm>

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How to find out about opportunities

Professional organizations and websites

- **AAP Section on International Child Health (SOICH)**
Is a great resource for those interested in international child health. They print a biannual section newsletter with updates about events in international child health. They also have a directory of overseas opportunities www.aap.org/cgi-bin/overseas/aapartcl.cfm , information about opportunities specific to residents and medical students <http://www.aap.org/sections/ich/resopportunities.htm> , and information about funding for a resident elective <http://www.aap.org/sections/ich/resfunding.htm>. Spend quality time exploring this site.
- **International Medical Health Education Consortium (IHMEC)**
Another overall quality website with multiple resources for work and volunteer opportunities in international child health. IHMEC is a consortium of faculty and health care educators dedicated to international health education in U.S. and Canadian medical schools and residency programs. They have an excellent guidebook on advising medical students and residents for international health experiences. From the

website, you can find an extensive list of international health organizations and websites, language courses, and multiple other resources about working in international health and preparing for electives.

- **American Medical Student Association (AMSA)** section on international health includes international health opportunities, funding, language electives, trip preparation material, conferences, and activism. Most of the site is geared for medical students but it is a helpful resource.
- **Child Family Health International (CFHI)** builds and strengthens sustainable healthcare services in underserved communities worldwide. They have a pediatric health program with medical and conversational Spanish classes coupled with clinical rotations serving children and families in La Paz, Bolivia. There are also programs in Ecuador, India, South Africa, and Mexico. If you are interested, contact Kevin Clarke (clarkek@pedcs.ucsf.edu) who has a working relationship with this organization.
- **Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO)** is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian voluntary organization headquartered in the United States dedicated to improving the availability and quality of health care in developing countries through training and education. They have a guide about volunteer health work in developing countries.
- **Yale International Scholars Program** Physician Scholars in International Health annually selects up to 10 physician-in-training scholars from institutions outside of Yale during their residency for 4 to 8 week rotations in overseas sites. Rotations are largely directed at clinical experiences, service and teaching, as opposed to research. Yale/Johnson & Johnson physician scholars will receive upon completion of the rotation, a travel award ranging from \$750 - \$4500 (maximum).
- **Roatan Volunteer Pediatric Clinic in Roatan**, Honduras delivers pediatric health care to an underprivileged population that currently has a shortage of well-trained health care providers. The clinic also is committed to training local health care providers to allow for the development of a self-sustaining pediatric clinic for underprivileged families in Roatan and the surrounding Bay Islands. The experience is largely outpatient/urgent care with significant Spanish use in patient interaction.
- **International Health Opportunities (IHOP)** University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is a student group for individuals who have interests in international health and world health issues. The website includes overseas opportunities available to any and all healthcare workers.
- **The Global Medicine Network** was created to establish personal and professional contacts among individuals and organizations working in international health and global medicine. The aim is to promote cooperative relationships in areas such as humanitarian service, medicine and supply donation, research, health education and visitor exchange. A primary goal of this website is to provide the mechanism by which members can personally contribute to the improvement of health conditions in underserved areas of the world. There is a resident section about available international electives and funding.
- **International Emergency Medicine Rotations Database**. Developed by the BU Department of Emergency Medicine <http://www2.acep.org/1,5229,0.html> is searchable by region but may not be applicable for pediatric residents.
- **Baylor AIDS/Pediatric AIDS Corps** (www.bayloraids.org) An academic-pharmaceutical partnership to expand antiretroviral therapy to children in Sub-Saharan Africa and China. Elective and post-residency experiences are available.
- **The J.F. Kapnek Trust** (www.jfkapnektrust.org) A non-profit based in the East Bay that holds a long-standing relationship with health institutions in Zimbabwe.

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Referral organizations

Look through a list of organizations that need volunteers or post yourself as an available volunteer

- International Medical Volunteers Association ([IMVA](#))
- [Medics Travel](#)
- AAP SOCIH Directory of International Service Opportunities (<http://www.aap.org/cgi-bin/overseas/aapartcl.cfm>)

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Religious and Missionary Groups

- [Christian Medical and Dental Associations](#)
- [American Jewish World Service](#)
- [Catholic Medical Mission Board](#)
- [World Medical Mission/Samaritan's Purse](#)

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Contact UCSF Pediatric residents, fellows, and faculty who have done international electives

AFRICA

- *Democratic Republic of Congo* [Ted Ruel, MD](#) collaborates on several clinical and educational projects in Goma and has visited on several occasions to teach. Along with [Sad Sayeed, MD, JD](#) in neonatology, they founded the [International Pediatrics Outreach Project](#) to improve child health in developing nations.
- *Botswana* [Lisa Dillabaugh, MD](#) and [Michelle Hsiang, MD](#) worked for the Baylor International AIDS Initiative in Gaborone.
- *Kenya* [Ted Ruel, MD](#) spent three months doing field research on Tsetse flies and Trypanosomiasis in Nairobi.(1996). [Bergen Nelson, MD](#) spent a month elective at a Nairobi pediatric hospital.
- *Lesotho* [Chris Buck, MD](#) participated in an elective here with [BIPAI](#).
- *Malawi* [Debby Miller, MD](#) spent one month at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi. At this teaching hospital, mornings were spent observing on rounds and in the afternoon, she precepted medical students. [Janell Routh, MD, MS](#) lived in Malawi while in the Peace Corps and returned to conduct malaria research while at UCSF.
- *Uganda* [Jeannie Chang Pitter, MD](#) is currently working with the Baylor International AIDS Initiative ([BIPAI](#)) at the Makerere University/Mulago Hospital Pediatric Infectious Disease Clinic in Kampala. [Shon Agarwal, MD](#) and [Allison Gehle, MD](#) have traveled to Kampala along with internal medicine residents.
- *Swaziland* [Ryan Phelps, MD, MPH](#) is currently working at a Pediatric AIDS Corps clinic.
- *Tanzania* [Jenna Meyer, MD](#) lived in Tanzania and has extensive contacts there.
- *Zambia* [Kevin Clarke, MD](#) worked in Lusaka for the Zambia-Emory HIV Research Project and conducted an elective with the Department of Pediatrics to establish a child sexual abuse clinic.

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CENTRAL AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA, AND CARRIBEAN

- *Bolivia* [Jason Zamkoff, MD](#) saw patients during a one month clinical elective in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Two weeks were spent at UCEBOL, the major teaching university, and

two weeks at a rural clinic in Monterro. Spanish proficiency is recommended for the elective.

- *Brazil* [Jason Zamkoff, MD](#) worked for one month in Curitiba, Brazil in Pequino Principe, the major tertiary referral center for Southern Brazil; in a rural clinic in Rio Branco du Sul; and at the Hospital de Clinicas, a large urban medical center for an indigent population. He lived with a Brazilian family. Portuguese proficiency is recommended.
- *Costa Rica* [Tara Greenhow, MD](#) worked in the Infectious Disease Department at the Children's Hospital in San Jose, Costa Rica during her residency for one month.
- *Cuba* [Ali Reed, MD](#) worked in Cuba through MEDICC Medical Education and Cooperation with Cuba through a travel award from the Yale/Johnson&Johnson's international scholars program.
- *El Salvador* [Becky Blankenburg, MD](#) worked in Santa Marta, El Salvador (through the organization Doctors for Global Health) for one month in clinics, assisting at regional medical fairs, going on home visits (to weigh and examine children), leading sex education and nutrition classes, and working with local youth organizations, like Stop AIDS. She lived with a family. Spanish proficiency is strongly recommended. Supervision was a problem. Not a very expensive elective.
- *Ecuador* [Becky Blankenburg, MD](#) worked in Quito, Ecuador (through Child Family Health International, www.cfhi.org). For two weeks from 7 am to 2 pm on weekdays she worked in an underserved public health clinic doing out-patient general pediatrics. For two weeks she also worked at an Urban Social Security Hospital NICU. On weekday afternoons she had one-on-one medical Spanish classes and tutoring. She stayed with a host family arranged through the program (Child Family Health International). Spanish proficiency is strongly recommended.
- *Guatemala* [Chris Stewart, MD](#) worked on Iodine Deficiency Disorders.
- *Honduras* [Erica Pan, MD](#) worked for one month in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch in 1999 as a third year resident in rural areas providing very basic health care. She arranged the elective through [Doctors for Global Health](#). [Kristin Ammon, MD](#) and [Isabelle Von Kohorn, MD](#) participated in the Roatan elective. [Naomi Bardach, MD](#) had a wonderful experience in Tela, Honduras through the Yale Johnson & Johnson Scholarship.
- *Peru* [Ted Ruel, MD](#) did a one month pediatrics infectious disease elective at Instituto de Salud del Niño, a large children's hospital in Lima.(2002)

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

- *Nepal* [Sad Sayeed, MD, JD](#) has contacts in Nepal, Africa, and India.
- *Thailand* [Ted Ruel, MD](#) spent one year at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok and with Mahidol University on clinical research of emerging viral diseases. He also rounded with pediatric infectious disease service(1998-99).
- *Vietnam* [Chris Stewart, MD](#) worked with Project Vietnam on health assessments in local communities, teaching NRP on the national and local scale, surgeries in rural settings, innovations and teaching such as CPAP in NICU setting, and Vitamin K administration on a provincial scale. He also worked with ORBIS and [Colin Partridge, MD](#) on projects to improve NICU care.
- *Vietnam* [Dzung Vo, MD](#) See his [pictures](#). See also [Project Vietnam](#) Dzung worked in a tertiary pediatrics hospital in Hanoi and in rural clinics and hospitals in Ha Nam for 2 months. Projects: 1) Denver Developmental Scale. Helped translate, adapt, and pilot-test Denver II in Vietnamese. He worked 8-5 most days. He worked with the Dept of Psychiatry at the National Hospital of Pediatrics on developing and pilot-testing Denver II in schools and clinics. Project Vietnam Medical Mission. Worked long days seeing patients in rural primary care clinics. He lived in Hanoi with a Project Vietnam member who rented a house there. Vietnamese language skills very helpful.

- *Micronesia* [Tina Hermos, MD](#) participated in the UCSF rotation located in Saipan. A stipend and housing arrangements are available. [Chris Stewart, MD](#) is also familiar with rotation specifics.

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Medical journals, newspapers, magazines

October 2004 issue of *Pediatric Annals* is devoted to international child health including how to get involved. Also, consider perusing the *Lancet* series on pediatric morbidity and mortality.

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How to fund your elective

- [AAP SOICH](#)
- [AAP Travel Grants](#) ([Ricky Choi, MD, MPH](#) was a successful recipient)
- [AMSA](#)

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Courses on international health, tropical medicine and languages

- [AAP SOICH](#)
- [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine](#)
- Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. [Debby Miller, MD](#) completed this three month course leading to a DTM&H. It is offered twice a year starting in September and February. There is also a similar but more expensive course at the London School. Debby was told the Liverpool course was more practical than the London course. The course is only for MDs and covers everything from public health to entomology to parasitology to epidemiology and has a strong clinical emphasis. You learn strong clinical principals as well as being able to recognize an anopheles mosquito at 50 yards and do your own stains, stool specimens, and microscopy. www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/taught/DiplTropMedHygiene.htm
- [Gorgas Courses in Tropical Medicine](#) is an intensive certificate-eligible course located in Peru and operated in conjunction with the University of Alabama-Birmingham.
- [SUPERCOURSE](#), University of Pittsburgh Department of Epidemiology has lectures on health in developing countries
- Diploma in Mountain Medicine, UK. [Debby Miller, MD](#) was part of the faculty starting this UIAA approved and academically recognized diploma in the UK. Required 3 modules: Scotland, Wales, Alps.

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Selected Pediatric Texts for work in Developing Countries

Ebrahim, G.J., **Paediatric Practice in Developing Countries**, 2nd ed. (acMillan Education: London. 1993) An excellent British text written by an expert in the field.

Eddleston, M., et al. **Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine**. (Oxford University Press, 2003) A very handy, practical resource while on location.

Stanfield, Paget, Balldin, Bo and Versluys, Zier, eds. **Child Health: A Manual for Medical and Health Workers in Health Centers and Rural Hospitals**. 2nd ed. (Nairobi: AMREF, 1999) Published by the African Medical and Research Foundation, this comprehensive often Africa-specific text also discusses HIV infection, chloroquine-resistant malaria, and newer antituberculosis and antihelminthic drugs

UNICEF, **The State of the World's Children** (Oxford: Oxford University, published annually) Articles focusing on health problems in different parts of the world as well as statistics on life expectancy, access to safe water, health services etc. for every developing country. View editions on the [website](#)

Werner, David. **Disabled Village Children: A Guide for Community Health Workers, Rehabilitation Workers and Families** (Hesperian Foundation, Berkeley, CA, 1987; 2nd edition 1996) Written with the help of disabled persons and pioneers of rehabilitation this book contains a wealth of simple, low-cost, and detailed ways of helping children with disabilities in developing countries including ways for them to find a role and be accepted in society.

Werner, David **Where there is no Doctor**, rev. ed (Berkeley: Hesperian Foundation, 1992). Landmark text with twenty-three chapters covering a wide range of topics from health education to common illnesses and a medication index.

World Health Organization. **Management of Severe Malnutrition: A Manual for Physicians and Other Senior Health Workers** (WHO, Geneva, 1999) Addressed to physicians, this practical manual gives guidelines for the management of severely malnourished children

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Get involved in international health in the bay area

The Bay Area Pediatric International Health Interest Group. Spearheaded by [Debby Miller, MD](#) this monthly meeting of health professionals interested in child health is an informal gathering with a speaker and light fare. E-mail Debby to be placed on the list serve. If you are interested in presenting your work notify Debby or [Kevin Clarke](#).

The Bay Area International Health Interest Group (BAIHIG) is run by health professionals from UCSF, UCB, and Stanford. Meetings rotate between members houses around those three locations. A light supper is provided so RSVP's are needed ahead of time. Readings are supplied ahead of time. There is also an excellent conference organized by the group in the Spring. Contact Tom Hall for a more precise description of the group and to be added to their email list. [Thomas L. Hall, MD](#)

The Institute for Global Health (IGH) (www.igh.ucsf.edu) A UCSF-based global health research organization and think tank with offices downtown. Contact [Tara Horvath](#) to be placed on their mailing list of academic talks.

UCSF Global Health Sciences (globalhealthsciences.ucsf.edu) A UCSF umbrella organization based at Laurel Heights dedicated to global health training and research.

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