Overseas Medical Volunteer & Internship Opportunities

“The overall motivation to volunteer abroad stems from a need to ignite a sense of social responsibility and activism, as well as from a desire to learn about a new country and culture. For some, international volunteering is also a way to gain a new perspective of the world and a renewed sense of the role they play in the world. Therefore, volunteer work abroad can be an intense experience, with opportunities to focus on meaningful global concerns that day-to-day life can't accommodate.” (www.crossculturalsolutions.org)

“Global Health: Ethics of International Medical Volunteerism”
The American Medical Associate Journal of Ethics, December 2006

“Hidden Ethics of Overseas Electives”
The New Physician, December 2007

AIDE – is a not-for-profit organization that offers international internship placements within the context of higher education. AIDE’s Medical internships are in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina, and Dentistry are in Argentina and Peru. We work closely with students and their universities to ensure they receive any necessary academic credit. Email: reinventyourself@aideabroad.org. Tel: 1-866-622-7623 ext. 137 or 1-512-904-1137. Deadline: Depending on the program you are applying for, we recommend that you apply two to three months in advance.

Amigos De Las Americas Summer Internship – 6-8 week program in a rural Latin American country community in a health related project. College students will participate in the correspondent volunteer program. Participation fee for CV’s is $4700. The interns live with families in that rural community. Must pay $500 refundable deposit with application. Tel: 713-782-5290 or 800-231-7796. Email: info@amigoslink.org. Deadline: rolling admission.

Break Away – A non-profit organization that supports the development of quality alternative break programs by providing training and information primarily to colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations interested in creating lifelong active citizens through these intensive service-learning programs. Students perform short-term projects for community agencies and learn about issues such as literacy, poverty, racism, hunger, homelessness and the environment. The objectives of an alternative break program are to involve college students in community-based service projects and to give students opportunities to learn about the problems faced by members of communities with whom they otherwise may have had little or no direct contact. Check website for applicable fees. Tel: 800-903-0646. E-Mail: breakaway@alternativebreaks.org. Deadline: see website.

Center for International Service Learning – Programs dedicated for solely pre-med students and special programs for field optometry, chiropractic, and nursing. Prepares the next generation of international medical care-givers by sending medical/ vision/ dental/ vet. teams to Latin America, the Caribbean, Central America and Africa. Provides field clinical experience, academic seminars. Must pay $85 non-refundable application fee and $200 deposit. Other fees apply. Check website. Travel financial aid available. Tel: 816-767-0481. Email: info@ISLonline.org. Deadline: varies by location. See website.
**Central Europe Summer Research Institute (CESRI)** – 8-week program designed to provide 14 U.S. graduate students in the sciences and engineering with international summer research experience in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland or Slovakia. Funded by NSF. Stipend of $2000, airfare, room and board, health and accident insurance. Must be US citizen or permanent resident working towards a Masters or Ph.D. Email: cesri@iie.org. Tel: 212-984-5442. **Deadline: February, see website for exact date.**

**Child Family Health International Medical Student Exchange Program** - A non-profit organization based in San Francisco, CA promoting primary care, integrative medicine and Spanish literacy among students studying health or pre-health curricula, through international health electives in Ecuador, India, South Africa and Mexico. Must be 21 years of age at the time of the program. Must pay $95 application fee and $350 deposit. Live with a local family and work with local physicians. Contact: Nick Penco (Student Program Manager). Tel: 415-957-9000 ext. 305 or 866-345-4674. Email: nick@cfhi.org. **Deadline: rolling.**

**Child Family Health International Global Health Service Learning** – 13-year old nonprofit organization that builds and strengthens sustainable healthcare services for communities worldwide. Offers programs in Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador, India and South Africa (minimal to conversant Spanish is required in the Spanish-speaking countries) service-learning in clinics alongside healthcare providers. All programs are 4 to 8 weeks. Program focus varies depending on location. Check website for deadlines and costs for each location. Contact: Nick Penco (Student Program Manager). Tel: or 866-345-4674 or 415-957-9000 ext. 305. Email: nick@cfhi.org. **Deadline: rolling.**

**Cross-Cultural Solutions** – Offers 3 tracks of volunteer and intern programs in Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Peru, Russia, Tanzania, Thailand. **Volunteer Abroad** is the flagship program of Cross-Cultural Solutions. Offered 2-12 weeks, with over 20 program sites in 12 countries. **Intern Abroad** was created for students or recent graduates interested in having an international internship or earning academic credit. Intern Abroad is offered from 3-12 weeks. **Insight Abroad** was developed for people who wanted to experience international volunteering in just one week. Check website for applicable fees and program dates. Tel: 800-380-4777 or 914-632-0022. Email: info@crossculturalsolutions.org.

**CUSO-VSO** - is the North American member of Voluntary Services Overseas International, a non-profit development agency that provides opportunities to change the world through international volunteering. Tel: 1-888-434-2876. Email: questions@cuso-vso.org.

**Engineering World Health Summer Institute** - An opportunity for engineering, physics, and chemistry students to gain hands on repair and design experience while helping disadvantaged hospitals and patients in a developing nation. Program begins with a one-month stay in Costa Rica or Tanzania. Students learn Spanish or Swahili and receive technical training in the operation and repair of medical equipment. After one-month training, students travel to their target hospitals, where they work repairing and installing equipment. Program fee for Africa is $6500 and for Central America is $6700. $45 application fee. Check website for detailed list of what this fee covers. Tel: 1-919-682-7788. Email: info@ewh.org. **Deadline: January, see website.**

**German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Research Internships in Science and Engineering (RISE)** – For students in the fields of biology, chemistry, earth sciences, engineering, and physics. Students work on research projects for 2-3 months in the summer, at top research institutions and universities in Germany. Scholarship covers housing and living expenses, but not transportation. Do not need to speak German to participate. Must be a rising junior or senior to apply. Tel: 00 49 (0)228 882-425. Email: rise@daad.de. **Deadline: January 31.**

**Global Health Education Consortium** – Non-profit organization of health professionals and institutions devoted to promoting international health education. Provides a large array of resources for students, including a global health bibliography, material on preparation for overseas assignment and foreign language study, and research info on international global health forces. Offers an extremely comprehensive array of information for medical students interested in pursuing international careers in health education. Especially useful are various...
manuals on preparation for overseas assignments and general information that might not otherwise be highlighted or taken for granted when applying for actual positions. It hosts a large consortium of resources and links to programs within the US and overseas. Tel: 415-777-4432. Email: info@globalhealthedu.org.

Global Medical Training – Program provides FREE humanitarian health care services to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Mexico (Yucatan). Trains/requires student participation in “providing supervised healthcare, including medical assessment and the development of a treatment plan.” Provides itineraries and details for lodging, medical work. Price includes round trip airfare, two meals/day, lodging, transportation, guides, event fees, border costs, and medical supplies. Check website for trip dates.

Contact: Dr. Wil Johnson, MD. Email: wilbur_johnson_520@comcast.net.

Global Service Corp. – Summer school credit for work in Costa Rica, Thailand or Kenya, 2 weeks to 6 months. Global Service Corps (GSC) is a nonprofit international volunteer organization that provides volunteer opportunities for people worldwide to live and work abroad in developing countries. Must pay $300 deposit at time of application. Encouraged to apply at least 90 days before the start of your desired program. Will have to pay a $300 rush enrollment fee if you apply less than 60 days prior to the start of your program. Tel: 415-551-0000. Email: gsc@globalservicecorps.org.

Global Volunteers – Lend your heart and hands to Global Volunteers’ Ecuador host communities: work on orphanage and child care projects for disabled and impoverished children. Help improve the residential, training, and daycare capacity of two amazing facilities. Or, provide hands-on care by assisting caregivers with recreational activities, teaching classes, serving meals, or counseling deaf or mentally challenged children. Must pay $350 deposit when submitting application. Tel: 800-487-1074.

Institution for International Cooperation and Development /Community- Campus Partnerships for Health – Non-profit organization that promotes health through partnerships between communities and colleges. Choose between program locations in Africa and South America. Must pay program fee, which covers food, lodging and transportation costs related to the program, training costs, international travel, travel vaccinations (not standard US vaccinations) and international health insurance. Once accepted, an enrollment fee of $350 is due to hold a spot on a team. The enrollment fee is non-refundable. Check website for fee schedules. Tel: 413-441-5126.

Email: info@iicd-volunteer.org.

International Medical Volunteers Association (IMVA) – Nonprofit organization that promotes voluntary medical activity. Provide information about volunteer opportunities and offer practical advice on how to find and choose compatible assignments. Facilitates volunteering by providing educational materials about health problems in various parts of the world and on how to function effectively while abroad, attempts to motivate healthcare workers to aid those most in need, assists volunteer-seeking organizations in locating volunteers to work in their programs and provides a forum for project cooperation, information, equipment and supply exchange. Tel: 508-435-7377.

Email: info@imva.org.

Lazos Solidarios – a non-profit organization with the goal of finding and creating bonds between indigenous communities and volunteers from all over the world. Their main goal is to promote the progress of these communities, promoting their culture, collective justice, equality and liberty. The program is specially designed for students with some training in medical sciences. Email: reservas@lazossolidarios.com, chuco73@hotmail.com, lazossolidarios@hotmail.com.

Local Government Commission - Volunteer in International Development – LGC is a non-profit organization working to build livable communities. Tel: 916-448-1198.

Medical Ministry International – Offers 1-2 week projects: general medicine, surgery, optometry and dentistry. Selected on basis of medical training and participation. Tel: 972-727-5864. Email: mmitx@mmint.org.
**Proworld** – Provides US-accredited semester and summer abroad programs, as well as hands-on internships, volunteer experiences, and alternative break programs. At ProWorld, participants are able to engage in meaningful volunteer projects alongside local community members. Currently, ProWorld offers opportunities in Peru, Mexico, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Thailand, India, Nepal, and Ghana. Tel: 877-429-6753. Email: info@proworldvolunteers.org.

**Remote Area Medical (RAM) Volunteer Corps** – Dedicated to providing free health care, dental care, eye care, veterinary services, and technical and educational assistance to people in remote areas of the US and the world. Volunteers participate in expeditions (at their own expense) in some of the world’s most exciting places. Tel: 865-579-1530. Email: ram@ramusa.org.

**Spanish Immersion with Medical Components Throughout Latin America** – Partners with Spanish language schools and offers a medical shadowing component. Learn in a hospital, clinic or medical dispensary: observe and participate according to language abilities and level of training. Do a home-stay with Mexican host family and excursions. Take classes Monday through Friday. Language immersion is a big part of this program. Check website for the applicable prices for the program locations. Tel: 970-412-7245. Email: info@spanishmedical.com.

**St. George’s University Med/Vet Summer Academy** – A 10-day premedical and pre-veterinary course that combines lectures and hands-on training. Program cost of $1,865 includes housing, meals, medical instruction, activities, and transportation within Grenada. Contact: Courtney Losito. Tel: 800-899-6337, ext. 319. Email: closito@sgu.edu. Deadline: March, see website for exact date.

**Study Abroad** – Extensive database of options for study abroad, intern abroad and volunteer abroad. Search by term, country and/or area of interest: Administration Health Services, Biochemistry, Biology, etc. Many links to other websites to volunteer/intern abroad.

**ThinkSwiss Research Scholarship** – Selects 15 undergraduate or graduate students from all fields of study to participate in a research project at a Swiss university or research lab. Will receive stipend of approximately $1000 per month for up to three months. Must be currently enrolled at an accredited U.S. university or college, studying at the graduate or undergraduate level and will have completed sophomore year by the time the research stay begins. Tel: 202-745-7958. Email: was.science@eda.admin.ch. Deadline: March 2012.

**Unite for Sight** – Organization that offers screening, education and surgeries, empowers communities to improve eye care and eliminate blindness, and provides training and manuals to implement vision screenings and education programs in the US and 25 other countries. Opportunities for students, public health professionals, nurses, educators, ophthalmologists, and optometrists. Website has lots of reviews, examples of what Unite for Sight did and where and many ways one can help. Tel: 203-404-4900. Email: volunteers@uniteforsight.org (volunteer enquiries).

**USC Somos Hermanos Student Immersion Program** – Six-month intensive language and culture immersion experience in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Goal is to increase the number of bilingual and culturally competent health care providers in the U.S. Students from any university who are between undergraduate and graduate school in the health care professions (e.g. medicine, nursing, dentistry, public health, physical therapy, etc.) are eligible to participate. Program combines intensive Spanish instruction, a comprehensive lecture series, socially and culturally relevant volunteer projects, weekly activities, and a trip to El Salvador and Mexico. Two sessions held each year, January to June, and July to December. Total cost of program is $7300. Check website to see what is included and excluded in the cost. Program has a small fund for scholarships, which are awarded on the basis of financial need. Email: info@somoshermanos.org. Deadline: October 31, 2011.
Visions in Action – Mexico – Vision in Action, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to achieving social and economic justice in the developing world through grassroots programs and communities of self-reliant volunteers. Volunteers are sent to Mexico (on the short-term volunteer program) to work for grassroots organizations working in nontraditional sectors of development, such as human rights, democratization and journalism. Receive $50 per month, disbursed in the local currency, to help with living expenses. The stipend can be refused if a volunteer works less than the required 40 hours a week (except if on approved leave) or breaks the rules of the house or program. Opportunities to volunteer in some African countries also available but those are 6-12 months long. Tel: 202-625-7402. Email: visions@visionsinaction.org.

*There are internships also available on a continuous basis in the U.S. office in Washington DC, each requiring a commitment of three months or more for 15-40 hours per week. Graduate students and seniors favored over sophomores and juniors, other things being equal.

Voluntary Services Overseas – is the world’s leading independent, international development charity that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries. VSO aims to support disadvantaged people in fulfilling their rights to physical, mental and social wellbeing, and to offer good-quality essential services. Tel: +44 (0) 20 8780 7500.

***General Tips: Look through all the websites, especially the ones with extensive databases, and they will be your best bet at finding something that you want to do. Remember to check participation fees and scholarships! Keep in mind the location and kind of work you would like and the amount of time you want to stay.

Additional Resources/Databases:

- Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG) International Volunteer Opportunities
- Global Health Medical Education Consortium
  - Annotated list of websites relevant to students and graduates of the health professions interested in global health (GH)
- The International Healthcare Opportunities Clearinghouse (IHOC)
  - A searchable database of both volunteer and paid positions throughout the world. Designed for health-care professionals and students who are interested in volunteer work with underserved communities at home or abroad.
- International Health Resources
  - Annotated listing of international heath sites from UC Berkeley Public Health Library
- International Medical Volunteer Association (IMVA)
  - General information on how to become an international volunteer as well as links to hundreds of volunteer opportunities
- World Health Organization (WHO)
  - The directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. WHO is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.
Appropriate Student Participation in Providing Patient Care
During Clinical Experiences Abroad

Acquiring clinical experience is a vital part of student preparation for careers in medicine, dentistry and other health care professions. Many students are now taking advantage of opportunities to gain experience in foreign countries where regulations concerning what students cannot do are less stringent, poorly defined or the existing regulations unenforced. While some students have gained excellent experiences abroad, and valuable service has been provided to people in need, the potential for harm and abuse in these situations cannot be ignored. Participation of inadequately trained students can have negative consequences including:

- **Harm done to the patient.** Our goal is to always help those in need, and the first step in that direction must be to avoid causing harm. As a student, it may be difficult to know what might cause harm so you must carefully avoid situations where there is any possibility that you might hurt someone.

- **Legal trouble with local authorities.** Even if a local doctor is supervising, or says that it is OK for you to perform a procedure, violation of local laws is still a punishable offence.

- **Putting your acceptance to professional schools at risk.** Many students think that the more in-depth clinical experience they have, the stronger their applications will be. However, taking on tasks that are beyond your training will make you look unethical, foolish and irresponsible to admission committees, and thus diminish or eliminate your chance for acceptance.

- **Losing money to a fraudulent company.** There are many companies that will, for a fee, help place you in a foreign clinic. Be aware that these companies are in the business of making money first, and where money is to be made there will be some who do so dishonestly. Check out these companies very carefully before signing any contracts. If an agency is pushing the idea that you will actually get to practice medicine while abroad, rather than simply observe and learn, you should have serious reservations about its ethical practices.

- **Physical harm to yourself.** Engaging in medical practices without sufficient training and protection can under certain circumstances result in harm to you as well as to the patient.

Although we cannot provide a list of every appropriate and inappropriate activity students may encounter, please consider carefully these broad guidelines to help choose your course of action:

1. The primary purpose of student clinical experience is observation, not hands-on treatment. You are there to learn, not to treat.
2. While it may be possible for students to learn and provide some basic patient care, more advanced techniques are far beyond the scope of a short training period. For example, students should not diagnose diseases, dispense medications, use scalpels or perform any invasive techniques. In dentistry, providing anesthesia, tooth extraction and applying sealants are among the procedures in which students should never engage personally.
3. There will always be disparity in what individual students are ready to do. Some students will be better prepared to take on more advanced patient care (from previous EMT training, for example) than others. Therefore, just because one of your peers has been able to successfully perform a particular task does not mean that you are also ready to tackle it. Be aware of your limitations and do not try to exceed them.
4. Always keep the welfare of the patient foremost in your mind, not the perceived opportunity for proving yourself to an admissions committee. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were in the place of a patient and a college student with no significant medical experience were about to perform this procedure on you. If this thought makes you feel uncomfortable, it is probably not an appropriate task for you to be doing.

You should also be aware that it is not necessary to travel abroad to serve those in dire need. There are many opportunities to help the poor and other underserved groups here in the US. There are likely many worthwhile volunteer opportunities in your community, with many more around the country. Many professional schools will be more impressed with what you can do to help close to home rather than while abroad.

This document was developed by Dr. Mark Sutherland at Hendrix College
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