

# Handbook for Medical Missions

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Help for Students and Residents  
Planning an International Experience

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# INTRODUCTION

- “I would like to do an elective rotation in an international setting. Where do I start? How do I find information?”
- “Information on medical missions is readily available but I am feeling overwhelmed by the whole process of trying to make good choices. Will you help me?”
- “My goal is to spend my medical career in a developing country and I have a chance to spend a few weeks overseas during my training. I have many questions and would like to talk with someone. But who?”

If you are a healthcare student (medical, dental, nursing, PT, public health, administration, etc.) interested in an international medical elective, this handbook is for you. We have created this resource to answer some of the most frequently asked questions and to assist you as you think, pray, and plan for a short-term international elective.

Many of our most respected Christian heroes are those who have lived their lives in distant, often isolated areas of the world. By spending a month or two overseas you will have an opportunity to learn first-hand from these leaders and experience the blessings and challenges of a global health ministry. International electives provide an incredible opportunity to develop your medical skills and help meet the tremendous health needs in the developing world while *growing in your love and commitment to Christ. We are confident that a few weeks overseas during your training will provide a challenging and unforgettable opportunity and it may just be the catalyst the Lord uses to call you into full-time ministry.*

The opportunities for Christian healthcare providers overseas are greater than ever before. Although CMDA does not send missionaries or have our own hospitals, clinics or projects; we do have over 1,000 members actively involved in a variety of healthcare situations around the world. Through them, we are well known within their sending agencies and overseas projects. In addition, we have partnerships with many other groups, such as the Christian Nurses Association, the Christian Physicians Assistants Association and the International Christian Medical and Dental Association. With this resource and CMDA’s Center for Medical Missions (CMM) and Campus and Community Ministries (CCM), we desire to help you connect and plan a successful international rotation.

## WHY DO AN INTERNATIONAL ELECTIVE?

1. First and foremost, it is an opportunity to serve our Lord, Jesus Christ. Throughout the Scriptures we are implored to care for those in need. As the story of the *Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29 – 37)* reminds us, *true Christian love is prepared to put itself at risk, and cross ethnic, social and cultural barriers to minister to another’s practical need.* Christ is our hope and healthcare provides a tremendous opportunity to minister to others while sharing the love of Christ both in word and deed. Just as Christ sent out the disciples to preach and heal so we should do the same.
2. You will see diseases and advanced pathology you will not find in the U.S. or Canada. *Overseas you will have the opportunity to see, treat and care for people suffering from disease and pathologies (i.e. malaria, leprosy, extra-pulmonary TB, typhoid, and amoebiasis, etc.) that you may have only read about in textbooks. You may also see more familiar conditions presenting in advanced stages with clinical signs and symptoms not often seen in the West.*
3. You will gain first-hand experience and develop strong, and even a few new, clinical skills. Overseas you will not have the luxury of all of the labs, tests and high-tech equipment we often rely on in the

West. You will be forced to sharpen your clinical assessments, hone decision making skills and practice ingenuity to provide the care your patients need. You may also have the opportunity to assist in surgery and participate in procedures you would only be able to observe at a distance back at home. *The skills and confidence you will gain from the hands-on experience will be incredibly valuable as you continue your training.*

4. You will have opportunity to experience life and the blessings and challenges of providing healthcare, in another culture. Many of the issues we face in the West are magnified in resource poor settings. This opportunity will provide a glimpse into a non-western worldview of health, disease and prevention. This varying perspective will challenge the way you view health and wellness and maybe even the way you practice medicine back home. Insights gained into disease prevention, health education, epidemiology, resource allocation, and primary health care will be invaluable wherever you integrate into a health system and ultimately practice.
5. It will allow you to 'test the waters' for future overseas Christian service and learn what additional skills are needed for a career in international global health. Is God calling you to a lifetime of international healthcare? Through this experience He will sharpen your vision for the future. *Such an elective will help dispel any false notions you have about working overseas, provide valuable insight into what it takes and what other electives or training you need as a fulltime international healthcare worker.*
6. It will provide a professional, personal and spiritually life-changing experience. As you journey and serve overseas you will likely find yourself in situations where you are tested and stretched physically, professionally, emotionally, and spiritually. *It is often in these situations where you learn much about yourself, the God you serve and the tremendous power of prayer. This opportunity may even change the direction of your career!*

## WHEN OR HOW SOON CAN I GO?

This often depends on where you want to go and what you want to do. The more clinical experience and understanding you have, the more beneficial your trip will be to those you are going to serve, the staff you are going to work alongside and yourself. With that said, your last year of school, residency or fellowship is a great time to go. However, if the opportunity comes as an undergraduate or in your early years of professional training, go for it! Although it can be more difficult to find a rotation site early in your training, the rewards can be just as great.

Planning and working out the details of a successful international healthcare rotation can take up to twelve to eighteen months. The best places fill quickly and with today's changing regulations, opportunities for credit during education and training can be challenging to get approved, so begin planning early.

If you are just starting the educational journey a great question to ask as you interview at schools and residency programs is the opportunity for international electives. If you are in the midst of your training and know you have a break, seek the Lord and begin inquiring of organizations and opportunities. Do not wait until your final year to start looking. For those of you who are already a bit late, start now and trust God to open doors.

## WHERE DO I START?

Finding overseas contacts, calculating the cost, raising support and making all the required arrangements sounds intimidating. Start early and take one step at a time. If you are going for academic credit, **start by understanding the requirements of your school**. Make an appointment with your Dean, advisor or residency / program director to discuss your interest in a global health elective. There are a number of issues you will need to clarify:

1. Academic credit. To receive academic credit for the experience you will need the Dean's approval. In most circumstances you will be able to use one of your student elective periods or vacation time to travel or as some students have done, combine the two together to stay longer. For your own learning and professional development and for those you are going to serve and serve alongside, we encourage you to stay as long as possible.
2. Academic qualifications. Your school may have requirements regarding the academic qualifications of your overseas mentor. For example, it could be required that the preceptor has Western medical training and/or is Board Certified, or its equivalent.
3. Timing. Be sure to discuss requirements as to when you are permitted to take electives away (i.e. National Board Examination dates, match day, graduation, etc.). Many students ask about match day. Today, in virtually all parts of the world, you will have some way to receive word of the match so it is entirely possible to be overseas on match day.
4. Location. Many schools will not allow you travel to countries that have a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html).) Check the list and discuss the location where you desire to serve.
5. Rotation requirements. Discuss what you and/or your mentor will need to do to in order for you to receive academic credit. Will you make a written report, an oral presentation, is your preceptor required to submit an evaluation, etc.?

Inquiring about this early can save time and frustration down the road. You do not want to spend time exploring options and setting up an opportunity that your school may nix. In some circumstances, like being the first one from your institution to do an overseas rotation, you may need to collect a lot of information in advance to demonstrate the benefits, strengths and safety of a rotation site.

## WHERE SHOULD I SERVE?

Once you know the requirements of your school or program and that an international elective is possible, you can begin exploring the possibilities.

### WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE FOR A GLOBAL HEALTH ROTATION?

Do you want to rotate through different wards or are you seeking to meet the criteria of a certain elective? It is very important to have an idea of what you want to glean from this opportunity as you explore the options. You don't want to go with false expectations and return disappointed. Discuss your expectations with your missionary mentor so you both understand the expectations and have the proper experience, supervision and teaching.

\*\*\*If you are not trained to do it in the U.S. do not expect to go and do it overseas. Remember these are people, created in God's image, who we seek to treat and care for with the utmost respect and

professional care so that through our love we will see them come to know the Creator God as their Savior. \*\*\*

## **ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A POTENTIAL LOCATION TO SERVE LONG-TERM?**

If so, your church or denomination's mission board is a great place to start asking about opportunities. Explore where they have medical work around the world. They should have knowledge of opportunities closely aligned to your spiritual background and Gospel vision.

## **ARE YOU DRAWN TO A SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION?**

It may be as simple as following a yearning the Lord has given you for a part of the world.

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY LANGUAGE SKILLS OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INVOLVED WITH A SPECIFIC CULTURE?**

One of the challenges of cross-cultural work is communication. Fluency in a foreign language is not required for a short-term overseas elective; there is tremendous value in going to a country where the language and culture are totally unfamiliar, but humility and a great sense of humor will be needed. English is spoken in many of the countries of eastern or southern Africa, India or Pakistan and it is also the primary teaching language at many of the hospital based training programs such as the Christian Internal Medicine Specialization (CIMS), Institute of Family Medicine (INFA-MED), and the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS). If you happen to speak French or Spanish, certain parts of West Africa or South America might be more appropriate and can certainly make your time more enjoyable and beneficial. However, if you do not have any language background, an interpreter can often be hired. Be sure to ask ahead of time so this can be arranged. Most locations can also provide print or online resources with basic greetings, phrases and vocabulary to study prior to your arrival.

## **DO YOU HAVE CERTAIN INTERESTS?**

Do you want to be involved in...?

- An urban or rural setting?
- Large teaching mission hospital or small rural hospital/clinic?
- Inpatient or outpatient setting?
- Faith-based or national church-run hospital/clinic or a government-run hospital/clinic?
- Community prevention, public health, or involvement with a specific disease e.g. HIV/AIDS, or tuberculosis.

\*\*\* Not all overseas work is in a mission setting. If a "tent-making" approach interests you, CMDA can refer you to members working in non-traditional medical settings overseas. \*\*\*

## **THE COST?**

As you explore options consider the cost involved. We will discuss finances later but remember these opportunities do not come without a price.

## **SHOULD I GO WITH A FRIEND? MY SPOUSE?**

- **Friend:** Yes, sharing the journey with someone you know can help you relax, feel safer, less isolated and lonely, and allow you to enjoy the opportunity even more. It is also helpful to have someone with whom you can talk over the experiences of the day but be aware that you will likely end up living in close quarters and in times of stress this could potentially lead to added stress and conflict.

- **Spouse:** Absolutely! This may be one of the greatest experiences of your life. Once you return home it is impossible to adequately “tell” someone about your experiences. Whether they are medical or non-medical, it will be important to consider what he/she will do. Most locations have many opportunities and will be glad to use their expertise but inquire before you go.

## MAKING CONTACT AND APPLICATION

As you narrow down the opportunities you will need to contact the hospital, project, or doctor with whom you wish to work. Remember you are inquiring of someone who is typically very busy. Keep correspondence as *brief* as possible but be sure to include the necessary information.

1. **Who** you are (med student, resident, male, female, married, single, coming with or without children, etc.) and if you are applying to a mission setting, a bit about your faith experience and church background.
2. **How** you heard of them.
3. **When** you would like to come.
4. **Why** you are interested in doing such an elective.
5. **Any specific requirements** of your school.
6. **Ask** if they are willing for you to come and if there are any other requirements of the hospital or organization that you will need to complete.

\*\*\*Many faith-based organizations require at least a short form application as part of the process. Government organizations may have other requirements. Every situation is different so carefully follow any instructions you receive. \*\*\*

Communication overseas is improving rapidly but it still can take some time. Do not procrastinate in following up with applications, needed information, and any other requirements. If you don't receive a reply in a couple weeks don't hesitate to follow up with a brief email making sure they received your most recent inquiry.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW OR SHOULD I ASK BEFORE I GO?

1. **Transportation:** Arrival airport, who will meet you and how you will get from the airport to the site.
2. **Food:** Are there items you should bring from the States? Do you need to shop in the arrival city before traveling out to the hospital or can most things be obtained at the site?
3. **Insurance:** Before you travel, obtain an emergency medical evacuation policy. They are relatively inexpensive and should you get sick, will provide essential transportation out of the country. ([www.aaintl.com/ins\\_travel.cfm](http://www.aaintl.com/ins_travel.cfm)). In regards to malpractice insurance, ask your field contact. In most countries today, malpractice is still not necessary. However, in places where it is needed the hospital or clinic's policy typically covers volunteers.
4. **Weather:** Rainy season, warm, cold, etc.
5. **Clothing:** What should you wear or not wear – shorts, jeans, dresses, church attire? Many places dress more conservatively than we do in the West. Scrubs, lab coats? Shoes. Jewelry – leave your expensive jewelry at home. Remember you will most likely be working among the poor.
6. **Mission or hospital policy:** Is there a code of conduct you must follow? Do they take a particular stand on spiritual gifts and their use in ministry or on church attendance or style of worship? Alcohol or tobacco?



7. Read up on the country: politics, religion, history, geography. Brush up on a bit about the culture and language of the region where you will be serving. Having some understanding of the history, culture and basic greetings on arrival will convey a sense of value in the people you are serving.

## FINANCES

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

For most opportunities you should expect to be responsible for all travel (international and in-country) and daily living expenses (housing, food and utilities). Early in your communication discuss what your expenses will be so you can budget appropriately. You do not want to be surprised by the bill at the end of your trip.

Your international airfare will be your biggest expense. The cost will depend on where you are going and time of year but it is not often affected by the length of your stay. You can expect to pay approximately \$500 to \$750 a month for the other expenses (in-country travel, room and board). However depending on the amount of in-country travel required and the local cost of living, this figure could be higher.

Be sure to ask in advance the best way to settle your account (check, US cash, local currency). Keep in mind, that most, if not all of the hospitals/projects and the people who work there are on a limited budget so be prompt in paying your expenses.

As you create a budget don't forget to include the costs of your visa, airport taxes, travel insurance, immunizations and malaria prophylaxis. Also inquire about other expenses such as special trips you could make within the country or possible hotel stays on arrival and departure.

### RAISING SUPPORT:

It is important that you begin working on the finances for your trip early. Don't procrastinate. God knows your need and is already preparing the way for you. He is in control and is always faithful in meeting our needs. If you have prayed about this trip and have felt God's leading, trust Him. As healthcare providers God has given you a special set of skills and talents that not all have. Many would love to have the opportunity to serve in this way but are unable to go themselves; yet through prayer and financial support of your ministry they are able to participate.

- Don't be shy about sharing where you are going, what you are doing and your needs. Be prepared for God to show up in some amazing ways.
- Write family, friends, co-workers and let them know of your plans and expenses.
- Prepare a simple budget and talk with your church's missions or outreach pastor. Some groups or people may feel challenged to meet one particular portion of your trip.
- If you are not going with an established non-profit organization, ask your church about establishing a tax-deductible account through which people can donate and receive a receipt for tax purposes.

### GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

While you shouldn't hesitate to apply for grants if you lack resources, if you already have sufficient funds, don't begrudge using it on such a valuable experience. You may be depriving someone who is not as well off of funds that make the difference between being able or not able to serve.

- *The Christian Medical & Dental Associations (CMDA)* [www.cmda.org/scholarships](http://www.cmda.org/scholarships). The amounts awarded are generally \$250 to \$500 for students and slightly more for residents. Each of these



funds has an application process, so pay careful attention to the requirements and deadlines. These funds are generally limited to qualified students and residents who are CMDA members.

- ✓ James S. Westra Scholarship for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> yr. medical and dental students
  - ✓ Johnson Short-Term Mission Scholarship for residents
- *Your university, Dean or residency program.* Often university and residency programs have grants and scholarships available to help offset travel or a portion of an international elective. These often require an application and there also may be a specific timeframe so inquire early and follow instructions.

## HOW LONG SHOULD I STAY?

Stay as long as your ministry partner and your program will allow. Most locations request a minimum of four to six weeks. The longer you are able to stay will maximize your own educational experience and increase the benefit you can provide to those you are coming to serve. Remember there is a tremendous learning curve when you arrive. The culture and its impact on health in addition to the resources you have and the care you are able to provide are going to be vastly different. To take full advantage of the opportunity you need time to ask questions, read and process this new information. It often takes a lifetime to make a lasting impact in a culture but the longer you can stay, the more you will learn and understand for the next time your return. The biggest expense is getting there, so staying a few more weeks typically will not cost you that much more.

## SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

It is easy to get distracted with all the ‘*other*’ things you need to do as you prepare for your short-term trip – immunizations, visas, plane tickets - but the most important thing you can do is to get yourself spiritually prepared for the ministry that lies ahead. Before you depart (not just the day before you leave or on the plane to your destination) examine your motives for serving. Why are you going? Is it to learn, to see medicine in a different culture or is it to declare the glory of the Lord among the nations (Psalm 96)? It may be a little of each. Spend time in prayer talking with the Lord about how He might use you. Ask Him to help you see the opportunities around you. In the Gospels the Lord prepares His disciples for ministry. Spend time reading them – read how the Lord went away before He began His earthly ministry or what He said before he sent out the disciples (Matthew 10) or the seventy-two (Luke 10). You will get busy and distracted packing and preparing to go, so carve out time and devote yourself to the reading of scripture, fasting and prayer for the ministry He is leading you to.

## WHAT ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS?

Be sure you know the facts before you leave the US. Check the CDC website ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)), ask your field contact or check with the appropriate Embassy website to find out what is required. Some countries require documentation to demonstrate that you are covered for yellow fever and a few will demand a certificate regarding your HIV status. As opposed to discovering their regulations at a remote border post, do yourself and your family a favor and get the appropriate immunizations.

Be aware that two or three visits will be necessary to complete the recommended immunization schedule, so inquire early and plan in advance. These shots are not cheap and most insurance carriers do not cover

them so be sure to add them to your budget. Be sure to check with the county health department to see if you can get any of the needed vaccines there.

If you are traveling to a malaria-endemic country we recommend taking chemoprophylaxis as well as measures to reduce exposure (bed nets, insecticide spray and wearing long sleeves and pants especially between dusk and dawn). Do yourself and your hosts a favor and take your antimalarial as prescribed. You have spent a lot of time and money only to spend several days sick in bed with malaria.

As a general rule, anyone travelling to a resource poor country may need to be up-to-date with the following:

- Polio
- Tetanus/Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Typhoid

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond the end of your proposed trip. In most situations a tourist visa (rather than a work visa) will suffice but requirements vary. Check with your field contact or the Embassy of your host country for up-to-date information on what you will need. Your travel agent or mission agency should also be able to advise you and might even arrange visa applications on your behalf. The length of time this takes will vary on country so again inquire early and allow, in general, two months for the relevant documents to be processed and returned.

Be sure to register with your home country's Embassy or Consulate in the country to which you are going. You can do this simply by registering for free with the US Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) (<https://step.state.gov/step/>). This free program allows the Department of State to better assist you in an emergency.

Take along the address and telephone number of your home country's Embassy or Consulate in the country you are going. Always carry a copy of the identification pages of your passport and visa along with a few spare passport photos in case the original is lost or stolen. Make sure you carry these photocopies and spare photos in a separate bag or location from the originals.

Also it may be worth scanning important documents (passport, visa, medical credentials and licensure, health information, etc.) and emailing them to yourself or carrying them with you on a small password protected or locked thumb drive.

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I GET THERE?

Healthcare systems in resource poor countries operate under considerable financial constraint and often limited resources. This means that the priorities in delivering health care, the standards attainable, and cultural attitudes to disease, suffering and death will be different from what you will be used to at home.

Do not expect to be given individualized systematic teaching. In most developing world health settings there is often not time to fully discuss all pathology that comes before you. Hopefully you will get regular

teaching and feedback from your mentors but expect to have to read and forage some information yourself.

If you are shocked by the way you see medicine practiced or the way 'missionaries' live, don't be overly critical. Quietly observe and try to work out why things are done the way they are. Don't be afraid to ask questions but remember you are a GUEST and should behave accordingly. It is not your job to make things 'right' during your month elective. Although it is tempting to try, and it may well be that changes are called for, don't! If it is something that you see as a matter of life and death, talk with your missionary mentor, in humility and in a manner open to learning and understanding. They will have insight into the practice of medicine in this culture that can help you understand why things are being done the way they are. Remember, just because things are done differently doesn't mean they are wrong.

Expect challenges. Travel, life and work overseas rarely go as 'planned.' Delays, lost luggage, dirt, pollution, and GI ailments from foods you are not accustomed to can throw a curve in your plans. Try to remember to smile and laugh. Role with the hiccups knowing that God has called you and He will sustain you.

Most importantly go with a Christ-like attitude, making the most of every opportunity. Serve with flexibility, joy, and humility and you will find that this will be a life-changing experience. We are confident that you will return having received much more than you were able to give.

## FINDING SITES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CONTACTS

- CMDA Directory of International Preceptor Sites. This list is updated regularly with places that are interested in having students. Most of the listed rotations have web links and email addresses for further information.  
[http://www.cmda.org/wcm/media/pdf/Sites\\_Medical\\_Mission\\_Experience.pdf](http://www.cmda.org/wcm/media/pdf/Sites_Medical_Mission_Experience.pdf). As we learn of new possibilities we will add them and if you know of other positions not listed we would appreciate you letting us know so it can be added.
- Your local CMDA chapter can be an excellent source for information. They may be able to provide the names of Christian physicians, dentists and others from your area who are working overseas.
- Your school should have a list of locations where other students have traveled. Check with your Dean or program director or like-minded faculty. Many USA based universities have a cooperative exchange agreement with an overseas university. It may be possible for you to do a rotation there. An example is the relationship between Indiana University and Moi University School of Medicine in Eldoret, Kenya.
- Ask your pastor or a mission's committee member at your church if there are missionaries supported by your congregation/denomination doing medical missions. It is amazing how many people work in small medical outreaches in relatively obscure places and yet each year students find a way to serve there.

### ORGANIZATIONS

- Christian Medical and Dental Association: [www.cmda.org](http://www.cmda.org)
- Christian Community Health Fellowship: [www.cchf.org](http://www.cchf.org)
- Fellowship of Christian Physician Assistants : [www.fcpa.net](http://www.fcpa.net)
- Nurses Christian Fellowship: <http://ncf-jcn.org/>
- Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International: [www.cphi.org](http://www.cphi.org)

- Christian Physical Therapist International: [www.cpti.org](http://www.cpti.org)
- Association of Christian Therapists: <http://actheals.org/>
- Christian Connection for International Health: [www.ccih.org](http://www.ccih.org)
- Baptist Medical and Dental Fellowship: [www.bmdf.org](http://www.bmdf.org)

## CONFERENCES

- Global Missions Health Conference - The largest medical missions' conference in the US, held each November in Louisville, KY. [www.medicalmissions.com](http://www.medicalmissions.com)
- CMDA National Convention - The annual professional meeting for the Christian Medical and Dental Association, typically held each Spring. [www.cmda.org](http://www.cmda.org)
- Prescription for Renewal – Samaritan's Purse / World Medical Mission's annual conference at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove, near Asheville, NC. [www.samaritanspurse.org/wmm](http://www.samaritanspurse.org/wmm)
- Christian Connections for International Health. <http://www.ccih.org/ccih-annual-conference.html>
- Medical Missions Interface. <http://www.abwe.org/training/mmi>

## BOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES

- [www.medicalmissions.com](http://www.medicalmissions.com)
- [www.medsend.org/associates/](http://www.medsend.org/associates/) Project MedSend's website lists the names of their partner organizations. All have some level of global healthcare ministry.
- Handbook for Short Term Medical Missionaries and Your Mission: Get Ready, Get Set, Go! by Dr. Bruce Steffes
- [www.missionarymedicine.net](http://www.missionarymedicine.net)
- [www.askamissionary.com](http://www.askamissionary.com)
- Health Education Program for Developing Countries <http://hepfdc.info/>
- When Helping Hurts by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

## THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING YOUR PACKING LIST

### DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Visa (if necessary)
- Passport photos
- Itinerary with flight and hotel confirmations
- Yellow card or proof of immunizations
- List of important phone numbers, addresses (international host, guest house, embassy, sending organization)
- Cash (clean 2003 or newer bills)
- Credit card/ATM/debit card - *VISA is most generally accepted. Alert your credit card company that you will be out of the country.*
- International health and evacuation insurance information/card
- Copy of US medical license, certificates and diploma
- Driver's license
- Letter of invitation (if applicable)

*Copy or scan important documents (passport, visa, ID, etc.). Carry a copy of these documents separate from the originals. Email a copy to you and a family member or friend.*

## CLOTHING \*

- Shirts
- Pants or long skirts
- Jeans and shorts
- Sweaters / jacket / coat
- Hat / bandanna / buff / scarf (especially if head covering necessary for women)
- Sunglasses
- Comfortable work shoes / sneakers / clogs (closed toe and able to get dirty)
- Sandals / trekking shoes / boots
- Rain jacket
- Swim suit
- Sleepwear
- “Sunday dress” – men: jacket and tie, women: long dress

*\*Contact your host to determine appropriate dress in the culture you will be working.*

## ELECTRONICS

- Laptop / tablet / eReader, power cord and surge protector
- Cell phone
- Music player with headphones
- Camera and memory cards
- Batteries and battery charger
- Electrical outlet adapter
- Flash Drive

## TOILETRIES

- Towel
- Shampoo / conditioner / soap / lotion
- Toothbrush / toothpaste
- Anti-bacterial hand sanitizer / wet wipes
- Glasses / contacts / contact solution
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Mosquito / insect repellent
- Comb / brush
- Razor and shaving cream
- Feminine products
- Tissues / toilet paper
- Laundry soap
- Personal first-aid kit
- Personal medications (allergy, anti-diarrhea, antibiotics, motion sickness, pain reliever, prescriptions, etc.)

## PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL

- White coat and scrubs
- Sterile gloves

- Specialty specific instruments

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Bible, journal and pens
- Headlamp & flashlight
- Umbrella (travel size)
- Leatherman / multi-tool (placed in checked luggage)
- TSA approved luggage locks or zip ties
- Earplugs
- Sheets or sleeping bag
- Travel pillow
- Travel alarm
- Mosquito net
- Water bottle or water purification system
- Reading material
- Some sort of entertainment – reading material, musical instrument, games, movies
- Snacks (non-perishable items)
- Gifts hosts – consider things which they typically can't get in-country: chocolate chips; chocolates and Candies; seasoning packets; powdered juice mixes; cake and cookie mixes; current books, DVDs, and Magazines

## SUMMARY...

We at CMDA are committed to serving you and your family. We want to do whatever we can to help make this international rotation all that it can be. Your time overseas has the potential to make a great impact on both you and others - your family, those you work with, and those who you give care to. There is no doubt you will be a more complete and compassionate physician for having taken the time to complete an international rotation. We encourage you to contact the CMDA's Center for Medical Missions department for assistance with any additional questions you have.