

# Safety, Ethical, and Communications Considerations for Medical Resident Placements in Global Health

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## Background

A growing interest in Global Health has led to increasing numbers of medical learners pursuing research and clinical elective placements internationally. There are however few standards in Global Health elective placements for Canadian residents .

The following principles are proposed to serve as guidelines for residents and post-graduate medical education programs involved in Global Health electives:

## Guiding Principles

### Residency Programs should:

1. Offer pre-departure training to all residents participating in global health placements;
2. Designate a contact person with whom the resident can communicate regarding safety, logistical, or ethical concerns before, during, and after their placement;
3. Provide clear expectations regarding resident conduct, training, service and educational commitments;
4. Verify that all residents obtain appropriate malpractice insurance for their destination, prior to departure;
5. Verify that residents have acquired the appropriate vaccinations and prophylaxis , obtained personal health insurance, received information on injury prevention and personal protection in clinical settings, been informed on HIV post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as relevant, and have registered through Registration of Canadians Abroad if necessary; and
6. Offer each returning resident a confidential debriefing or counseling session.

### Residents should:

1. Communicate with their hosts regarding service expectations, learning opportunities , logistics, safety, and remuneration;
2. Obtain the appropriate visas and documentation from local governments, health authorities, and research ethics review boards prior to departure;
3. Research their destination including local health concerns (food & water safety, sanitation, etc.), safety considerations(political climate, crime, clinical safety, etc.), and diagnosis and treatment of locally prevalent diseases;
4. Attempt to adapt themselves to local languages, laws, and customs (appropriate attire, communications etiquette, etc.);
5. Be aware of the four principles of global health ethics for medical learners as outlined by Pinto and Upshur (Humility, Introspection, Solidarity, and Social Justice) <sup>i</sup>; and
6. Be aware of ethical concerns including “medical tourism” , coerced consent from patients and research subjects, and power imbalances with or between local staff and organizations, or with patients / research participants leading to inappropriate, poorly informed, or coerced decisions.

i. Pinto A.D. and Upshur R.E.G., *Global Health Ethics for Students*, *Developing World Bioethics*, 9(1), pp 1-10, 2007.

### What is Global Health?

*The health of under-resourced and / or marginalized populations locally and abroad*



### What is Medical Tourism?

*Participation in a clinical elective to gain practice experience outside the scope of one's training or in a research elective from which neither the study participants nor their community will benefit.*