Office of Global Health Education
Student Advisory Travel Handbook

Overview: This guide is designed to help Weill Cornell students prepare for their international electives. It includes useful checklists and tips before students depart, along with important information on resources, requirements, and safety protocols. The objective of this guide is to make your experience as enjoyable and stress-free as possible! Being uninformed may be hazardous to your health!

Please note:
OGHE and the International Committee will not approve travel to countries in which there is ongoing warfare, greater than minor strife, based on the judgment of the OGHE, or are characterized by a humanitarian crisis.

Contents:

OGHE Forms & International Committee Requirements p. 2-12
Cancellation Policy p. 13
Travel Logistics p. 14-15
Be Prepared For Emergencies p. 16-22
OGHE & International Committee Requirements

1. Financial Aid Forms
   - **First Year Students** – Fill out and have your advisor sign the required financial aid forms. The financial aid forms can be obtained in C-114 see Rebecca Hertig, Assistant Director of Financial Aid and Federal Work-Study Coordinator.
   - **All Other Students** – Fill out and have your advisor sign the required independent elective form ("The Pink Sheet"). The independent elective form can be obtained in the Registrar’s office located in Room C-114.

2. Read and sign the Weill Cornell Agreement and Release Form and the Consent Form (pages 3-7). No reimbursements will be made to any student who leaves the country without signing and submitting these forms.

3. Reimbursements – Keep all airline receipts (ie, proof of purchase of tickets) and travel itineraries. Upon return, submit them along with a signed payment requisition form (page 8) to Maritza Montalvo at 402 East 67th Street, 2nd Floor (mmontalv@med.cornell.edu).

4. Evaluation Form – **Fourth Years Only** – Complete the Elective Student Assessment Form if you would like to receive credit for the elective. The form is on page 9.

5. Post Trip Summary – A post-trip summary of your experience is required before reimbursement will be authorized. Submit the write-up to Maritza Montalvo mmontalv@med.cornell.edu and three pictures to globalhealthTA@med.cornell.edu See detailed guidelines on pages 10-11.

6. Student Poster Presentation – You are required to prepare a poster focusing on your experience for display at an International Reception in either October (first years) or May (all other students). Guidelines and a sample outline for the poster can be found on page 12.
Office of Global Health Education
Agreement & Release Overseas Travel / International Program

All students are required to complete and sign the following forms and return it to the Office of Global Health Education, 402 East 67 Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10065, prior to departure for travel and/or study abroad.

Participant’s Name: ________________________________

Local Address: ___________________________________

Telephone: ______________________________________

Email: __________________________________________

Emergency Contact Person: ________________________
Name: __________________________________________

Telephone: ______________________________________

Location: _________________________________________

Dates away: ______________________________________

WCMC does not discriminate against individuals based on physical or mental illness or related disability. However, if a student has a history of any medical problems during the previous two years, consultation with your personal physician is recommended prior to
departure to discuss the potential stress and difficulties attendant in traveling and studying overseas.

1. Participation in the above program is entirely voluntary and will require transportation to and habitation in the country of ____________________________ and may involve risks relating to or arising out of program activities.

2. Participant understands that there are risks inherent in such activity and acknowledges that he or she has been apprised of such risks (to the extent such risks are known to WCMC), and agrees to assume all risks and responsibility for his or her health, safety, and property while participating in this program.

3. Participant, and Participant’s heirs and assigns, release Cornell University, WCMC, their officers, trustees, overseers, agents and employees from any and all liability, damage or claim of any nature whatsoever arising out of, or in any way related to participation in the overseas program, including, but not limited to, any medical authorization given to Cornell or WCMC, acts of God, acts or omissions of any third parties (including but not limited to common carriers, hotels, restaurants, or other firms, or agencies).

4. Participant agrees to indemnify and hold Cornell University, WCMC, their officers, trustees, overseers, agents and employees harmless from any damage or liability incurred as a result of any illness or accident Participant may suffer, including the costs of any medical care, or any injury or damage to any person or property of others with Participant may cause, and from any financial liability or obligation which Participant may personal incur, while participating in the overseas program.

5. Participant understands that the WCMC reserves the right to make cancellations, changes, or substitutions in cases of emergency or changed condition, or in the interest of any group with which the Participant may be traveling or collaborating. Should WCMC cancel the program, refunds will be made, unless the cancellation is due to political, natural, technological or other catastrophes beyond the WCMC’s control in which case WCMC will be able to refund only uncommitted and recoverable funds.

6. Participant understands the WCMC requires that the Participant be covered by appropriate accident and medical insurance and that he or she be financially responsible for such expenses. Participant also agrees that if he or she is planning to operate a motor vehicle during his or her participation, Participant must obtain liability and collision insurance that will cover him or her in the applicable foreign countries. WCMC recommends that Participants insure their property from loss and theft.

7. Participant understands and agrees that all students are subject to Cornell and WCMC regulations (including, but not limited to, the WCMC Standards of Conduct), the host program’s and/or university’s laws, rules, regulations, program guidelines, and laws of the host country. In the event of violation of any of the foregoing, or any other behavior, which is detrimental to the Participant, other students, or the program, the director of the program shall have the right to dismiss the Participant from the program. WCMC and
Cornell are not responsible for the defense of a Participant accused of a violation of the laws, regulation, rules or customs of the host country, and is not responsible for the payment of any fines or other penalties resulting from such violations.

8. Participant pledges and agrees to conduct him or herself in a manner that reflects favorably on WCMC and the United States.

9. Participant understands that the manufacture, distribution, possession, use or sale of controlled substances as defined by New York State or Federal law, or the laws of the host country is prohibited during travel, study and work abroad. Participant understands that he or she will be directly subject to the laws and legal procedures as apply to the use, possession and distribution of illegal drugs as enforced by local authorities.

10. Participant further understands and agrees that he or she is solely responsible for ascertaining the lawful age for the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in the host country and for his or her conduct in compliance with local laws as enforced by local authorities.

11. Participant agrees that he or she will be responsible for all medical and related expenses incurred while participating in the program. For medical and accident insurance, participant will be insured under:

Name of Insurance Company (if not Medical School)

____________________________________________
Policy Number Expiration

Participant certifies that he or she is at least 18 years of age or older.
I have read and understand the above provisions and agree to be bound by the provisions.

____________________________________________
Signature

____________________________________________
Print Name Date
Office of Global Health Education
Consent Form

I, __________________________, understand that there are risks inherent in such activity and I have been apprised of such risks and agree to assume all said risks and responsibility for my health, safety, and property while participating in this program. I, and my heirs and assigns, release Cornell University, WCMC, their officers, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage or claim of any nature whatsoever arising out of, or in any related to my participation in this program, including, but not limited to, the medical authorization given to WCMC, acts of God, acts or omissions of any third parties (including but not limited to common carriers, hotels, restaurants, or other firms or agencies), except such as may directly result from the negligence of WCMC, its offices, agent, or employees. I agree to indemnify and hold Cornell and WCMC harmless from any damage or liability incurred by Cornell and/or WCMC as a result of any illness I may suffer, including the cost of medical care, or any injury or damage to the person or property of others which I may cause, or from any financial liability or obligation which I may personally incur, while participating in this program.

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________________
Signature                                      Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Print Name
Office of Global Health Education

The following to be executed if participant will travel to a country for which the United States Department of State has issued a travel warning:

I further understand and agree that if I am traveling to a country for which the U.S. Department of State has issued a travel warning, I am responsible for reviewing the Consular Information Sheets for that country available on the U.S. Department of State website (http://www.travel.state.gov), am familiar with the conditions in that country, understand the potential hazards, and have voluntarily made the decision to travel to such country.

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                      Date

_________________________________________
Print Name
WEILL CORNELL MEDICAL COLLEGE
Elective Student Assessment
*Due no later than 4 weeks after course end

NAME OF STUDENT _________________________________________________ Indicate your Class: _________________

ELECTIVE NUMBER: _____________________ ELECTIVE TITLE _______________________________

LOCATION: _______________________________________________________________

DATES OF ROTATION: ________________________________________________

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<td>2. Ability to perform competent physical examination</td>
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<td>3. Ability to give a concise presentation</td>
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<td>4. Ability to formulate differential diagnosis</td>
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<td>2. Motivation</td>
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<td>3. Reliability</td>
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<td>4. Professional demeanor</td>
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<td>5. Teamwork</td>
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<td>6. Patient rapport</td>
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<td>7. Relationships with faculty</td>
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<td>8. Relationships with other health professionals</td>
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Narrative Comments Required (please use reverse if necessary):

Overall Grade: Pass______ Fail_____ Reported by: _______________________________ Date ____________

Name/Title: _______________________________

(type or print)

*These forms should be completed and returned by a faculty member via email or hardcopy.
Please return completed form to: Registrar, Weill Cornell Medical College
Office of Student Services
1300 York Avenue, Room C-114, New York, N.Y. 10065
registrar@med.cornell.edu
DO NOT FAX THIS FORM
Guidelines for Post-Applied Experience Summary Write Up

Each student participating in an International Applied Experience that is approved by the International Committee and funded by the Office of Global Health Education is required to submit a short report (500-1500 words) and three photos upon return to Weill Cornell. The objective of this write up is to have the student summarize the professional and personal impact of the experience as well as to serve as a guide for future students who are considering doing the same or similar elective at the host organization. The pictures will be used for the website, international reception brochures and slideshows, and other events to highlight student participation in international experiences.

Those students, whose international experience focused on a research project, please follow the guidelines delineated in sections I. and II, IV.

Those students, whose international experience focused on clinical service, please follow the guidelines delineated in sections I. and III, IV.

I. General Description - Describe the general concept of your project/activity and the specific learning objectives. Include in your write up:
   • Name and location of host organization
   • Host Mentor
   • When elective was taken and for how long
   • Responsibilities; i.e., description of what you did

II. Research Projects (clinical, bench, quality improvement, surveys, etc.) – If you conducted research include the following sections:
   • Was IRB approval required for your project?
     o Yes
     o No
     o Not applicable
   • Background and Purpose of Study
     o Identify gaps of knowledge addressed by your project
     o Explain the purpose of your study and how your work relates to the broader field of global health
   • Objectives; i.e., What were you hoping to accomplish in this project?
   • Methods; i.e., Provide a clear description of study population and data collection/analysis
   • Results & Conclusions
     o Report and discussion of results (can be qualitative or quantitative)
     o Discuss the impact of project/study on the study population
     o Discuss future directions for your work, questions that you would like to pursue further

III. Clinical Observation/ Rotation – If you participated in clinical observation/rotation/community service/service learning projects, include the following
sections:
  • Background:
    o Discuss the unmet health needs in the community.
    o Discuss the types of clinical/service activities in the community.
  • Objectives
    o What were you hoping to accomplish in this project?
    o What were you hoping to learn from this experience?
  • Present a description of the following:
    o Local community you served/patient population
    o Roles of care providers, and your roles within "the team"
    o Healthcare resources on site, regionally, etc., including the community organizations you worked with
    o Your clinical or service responsibilities – include scope and depth

IV. Personal Impact
  • How did your experience meet or not meet your learning objectives?
  • Describe the best aspects about the experience.
  • Discuss the obstacles and opportunities that emerged during your applied experience, and how you handle these situations.
  • Describe the impact your experience has on personal and professional development, including future career goals.
  • List three remaining questions you still have that you would like to pursue further.
  • What advice would you give future students interested in doing a similar project at the host organization?
Guidelines for International Reception Poster

What should my Poster look like?

- The poster should look professional as if you are preparing a poster for a professional scientific conference.
- The poster should contain the following sections. (This is a recommend outline.)
  - Name & Class Year
  - Title of Research Study and Site of Program
  - Background
  - Research Question (Focus / Purpose of Project)
  - Methods (Describe Study Design and Sample)
  - Student’s Role (Your role in data collection, analysis, & other)
  - Results (Include tables, figures, etc.)
  - Conclusions
  - Pictures (Of relevant medical situations and local colleagues, not tourist photos)
  - Acknowledgements
  - Optional: Contact Information (Program, Student, Host Mentor)

- Poster dimensions should be approximately 30 x 40
- The Poster should not include personal pictures, pictures of faces of patients, scraps of paper tacked on to a poster board.
- You can go to Weill Cornell Duplicating Department's Print Shop, to Staples or to Fed Ex (see price estimates below), or use an online site to prepare your Poster. OGHE will provide the actual easel boards, onto which you will tack your poster board, tacks, tape, etc. OGHE cannot reimburse you for the cost of preparing the Poster. The dimensions of these stand-alone easel boards are 72L x 48W.
- Pages/photos may be printed in color, but OGHE cannot print in color for you.
- Students who traveled together to the same site may prepare a joint poster.

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<th>Print Shop</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
<th>Price Estimates (based on 30x40 Poster)</th>
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<td>212-746-0935</td>
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<td>212-223-0347</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fed Ex</td>
<td>212-452-0142</td>
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(*Staples is clearly the least expensive but if there are any problems with your presentation, or if it isn’t the right dimensions for the paper, they will charge you extra to fix it. They can print it on the same day, though, and Weill Duplicating needs 4 business days.*)
International Committee and OGHE
Cancellation Policy for International Electives

The organization and preparation for an international elective requires significant administrative resources and time. As the demand for spots often exceeds the supply, it is important that we optimize our use of these scarce resources. Students who wish to take an international elective during their final year of medical school must submit an application for approval of the elective to the International Committee. Notification of approval of the elective will be made to the student in writing.

Students who are notified of an approved international elective will then have 30 days from the date of approval notification to confirm or cancel the international elective. This must be done in writing to the Director of the Office of Global Health Education. If the student does not respond after 30 days he or she will be deemed to have declined the opportunity to take the elective and the elective will be made available to another student.

Once a student has confirmed his or her intent to accept the opportunity for an approved international elective, he or she is expected to keep that commitment. If a student believes that he or she needs to cancel an international elective, he or she must provide a written request with justification to the Director of the Office of Global Health Education. Compelling reasons for cancellation of a prior commitment to an international elective would include, but are not limited to, a personal illness or a major illness in a close family member (child, sibling, spouse, partner, or parent). Students who cancel the elective and are deemed to not have provided a compelling reason for their cancellation will be required to pay $100 to cover the administrative costs incurred in preparing for that elective.
Travel Logistics

- Try to purchase your tickets 3 months in advance.
  o OGHE reimburses travelers at the lowest airline price posted.
  o Useful websites: Google Flights, Kayak, Expedia, Priceline, Travelocity, STA Travel, StudentUniverse, Yapta
  o Also check individual airline company's website.
  o Some airlines offer refunds. Yapta.com can track and notify you about changes in price.
  o Consider purchasing flight insurance.

- Obtain up-to-date travel documents: passports and visas
  o If your passport is due to expire within six months of your travel dates, you should seriously consider renewing it before you leave the country.
    ▪ [https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html)
  o Check the State Department website for country specific details (Visa requirements, currency, health conditions, etc):
    ▪ [https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html)
  o Travel on a tourist Visa. Be sure your passport has a sufficient number of blank pages for visas and country stamps.
  o Make copies of passport, health insurance, credit cards, and other important documents, and keep a set in each luggage piece.

- Obtain necessary vaccinations.
  o Unfortunately, OGHE cannot reimburse travelers for vaccinations/immunizations.
  o Visit the CDC website for required or recommended immunizations and vaccinations.
  o The Travel Medicine clinic at Weill Cornell provides vaccinations/immunizations, but there is a charge.

- Obtain malaria prophylaxis if necessary
  o CDC website lists malaria endemic areas.
  o Strategies for combating malaria include: medical prophylaxis, Mallarone (curative), mosquito nets, bug spray and repellants.
  o Buy a mosquito net. Sources include REI.com, EMS.com, or Amazon.

- Connect with students who have travelled to your destination before for firsthand perspective and tips.
  o Check out the WCMC Global Health Project Database to find contact information for older students
  o [http://weillcornell.edu/globalhealth/mappage.html](http://weillcornell.edu/globalhealth/mappage.html)
• Contact your host country mentor to finalize your schedule and inquire about housing options.

• Learn about the area you are working in
  o Buy a guidebook! Check out Lonely Planet (great pictures and cultural background of cities and attractions), Let's Go (great resource for hostel names and cheap restaurants/bars) or RoughGuide (consider copying pages that are specific for your destination).
  o University of Michigan’s Student Handbook for Global Engagement – Available online for free
  o A Student’s Guide to International Health and Funding

• What to pack?
  o First Aid Kit: Insect repellent, sunscreen, Purell, Band-Aids, pain medication (Tylenol, Advil), moleskin, tweezers, anti-diarrheal medication (Pepto-Bismol, Imodium), feminine hygiene products.
  o Prescription medications with a copy of prescription/letter from your doctor.
  o Put all valuables (camera, computer, jewelry, cash, etc.) in your carry-on bag, never in your checked luggage.
  o Label all luggage.
  o Note: most airlines charge for oversized or extra bags.

• Get to the airport on time! Some options to JFK & Newark Airports include:
  o Take the E train from Penn Station to Jamaica Station. From Jamaica, take AirTrain to JFK. AirTrain stops at all terminals.
  o Airport shuttle bus to JFK and Newark leaves from Port Authority.
  o Take NJ Transit Train from 34th Street Penn Station to Newark Liberty International Airport
  o Take an Uber or taxi.
Be Prepared for Emergencies

- The Need for a Crisis and Incident Management Plan
  - Regardless of where one may be traveling, the need for an emergency evacuation plan cannot be more strongly stressed. Political strife and instability can occur anywhere in the world and at any time. As such, travelers should have an emergency plan in place before they leave the country.
  - Weill Cornell Medicine offers travel assistance to all students traveling on University-sanctioned trips.
  - Weill Cornell Medicine has international resources available for all of its travelers at: http://med.cornell.edu/risk-management/best_practices/international_travel.html.
  - Further, all faculty, students and staff are covered under the International SOS (ISOS) Assistance plan while they travel on college business. They handle evacuation procedures and emergencies for travelers.
  - Information on ISOS can be found at ISOS’s website: internationalsos.com/members. WCM’s membership number is 11BYSG788939. Travelers are strongly encouraged to download the ISOS Assistance App (app.internationalsos.com) Once WCM’s membership is entered, you will gain access to all of the country guide information available on the website. It also allows for one-click dialing into the Assistance Center. If you don’t have the actual card when calling, just let the operator know the school name and the case will be recorded under the WCM membership number.

- International SOS (ISOS) Assistance is mandatory. Cornell University provides this at no cost to the traveler.
  - International SOS (ISOS), a global medical, safety and security solutions provider, automatically covers Weill Cornell medical students who travel internationally under the auspices of the Office of Global Health Education. A full range of medical and emergency services is provided, including onsite medical assistance services, medical evacuation and repatriation services, security and political evacuation services.
  - Each student will be given an International SOS (ISOS) Assistance card. The student should keep the card as well as their website URL address in a safe place when traveling abroad.
  - You may print out an ID card by going to the WCMC Intranet and clicking the "WCMC Portal to International SOS (ISOS)" link. Access to this link is restricted to the WCMC network; if you are not on the network, please use the WCMC WebVPN service to access the Intranet. If you need assistance, please call Risk Management at 646-962-7683
  - See page 18 for a copy of the ISOS card.
• Know what to do in an emergency!
  o Keep International SOS (ISOS) Insurance Card in a safe place. In case of an emergency, refer to contact information on card, or use the app to contact them.
  o Contact the Office of Global Health Education. In case of an emergency (including robbery, illness, lost documents), call Maritza Montalvo at OGHE collect: 646-962-8005. Feel free to email Dr. Madelon Finkel at maf2011@med.cornell.edu if you are having trouble adjusting, need to talk things over.
  o Know the number and location of the U.S. Embassy and consider checking in with the embassy or consulate upon arrival.

• Water Safety
  o Better safe than sorry! Avoid fresh fruits/vegetables that were likely washed in local water. Opt for fruits with protective skin (ie, bananas).
  o Avoid mixed juice drinks, since they were also likely mixed with water.
  o Avoid ice cubes in drinks.
  o Consider buying water purification tablets, if traveling to rural areas.
  o Ask about local ways of disinfecting water (filters and UV systems).

• Food Safety
  o Eating street food can be one of the favorite elements of a trip. It can remain a favorite element if a few considerations are made.
  o Choose freshly fried and well-cooked foods.
  o Some diseases and bugs don’t get killed when food is simply reheated.
  o Use common sense when eating from street/food vendors.

• General Health
  o Seek medical care if you are not well.
  o Practice safe sex; use a condom.
  o An enjoyable experience is the goal.
  o Be smart about traveling and don’t take unnecessary risks while abroad.
INTERNATIONAL SOS (ISOS) CARD

WEILL CORNELL MEDICAL COLLEGE (WCMC) NEW YORK Membership No: 11BYSG788939 Dedicated Tel: +1 215 942 8478
Call our medical and travel security experts 24/7. Call for preventive or emergency enquiries. Call before, during and after travel or assignment.

Download the free Assistance App from app.internationalsos.com
Call our medical and travel security experts 24/7. Call for preventive or emergency enquiries. Call before, during and after travel or assignment.

Download the free Assistance App from app.internationalsos.com
Enter WCM’s membership number: 11BYSG788939
(It allows for one-click dialing into the Assistance Center)
If you don’t have the card when calling, just let the operator know the school name and the case will be recorded under the WCM membership number.
Emergency Protocol & Procedures: Sexual Assault and Rape

Students traveling abroad may be a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault. While sexual harassment (ranging from whistling, suggestive comments, standing too close, or unwelcome sexual advances) and sexual assault (e.g., mugging, sexual assault, rape) are rare, they can and do occur.

If you are a victim of sexually harassment, quickly get away from the individual/individuals harassing you. Call and/or scream for help. Screaming will probably scare away the individual(s) and will usually draw a crowd.

If you are involved in a sexual assault or rape while traveling abroad, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Immediately contact your WCM mentor as well as your host mentor to report the incident. If you are not comfortable talking about the incident with your host mentor, be sure that you contact your WCM mentor. Seek medical attention immediately.

- In addition to contacting your WCM mentor, also contact OGHE to report the incident (Dr. Finkel’s number: Office: 646 962-8038; Home: 914-765-0451; email: maf2011@med.cornell.edu).

- Do not contact the local police unless your host mentor advises you to do so.

- Consider contacting the local United States Embassy or Consulate to report the assault or rape.

- If raped, seek emergency treatment for sexually transmitted infections, initiate HIV prophylaxis, and take “the morning after pill”.

- If raped, or if the sexually assault results in injury, return to the United States for emergency medical care and counseling. Student health or the NYP emergency department can provide you with appropriate care and counseling. If you prefer to seek care from your own physician, do so.

- International SOS (ISOS) will help arrange transport back to the United States. Contact them 24/7 by calling 1-215-942-8478 (WCM Membership number: 11BYSG788939)
Emergency Protocol & Procedures: Prophylaxis after HIV Exposure

The prevalence of HIV infection is high in most countries in the “developing world”. Potential risks to medical students doing electives would include injury from a sharp, mucous membrane exposure to blood and body fluids, exposure to blood or body fluids following an accident on the road, sexual exposure, and exposure during medical care involving injections or blood transfusions. To date, there are no reports of medical students becoming HIV positive during an elective in a developing country; however, it is prudent to take appropriate precautions.

Students engaging in activities where there is a reasonable risk of exposure to HIV should inquire with their sponsor whether or not they will have access to Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and should receive training in the local exposure protocol once they arrive on location. Otherwise students are advised to travel with their own supply of an appropriate regimen currently recommended to protect against HIV infection. Recommended regimens are updated regularly. A sample regimen is provided below. You can consider donating the medication to your medical host if they are not used. Students may discuss appropriate PEP regimens with their personal physicians or set up a visit with Weill Cornell Medicine Student Health Services.

If significant exposure to blood or bodily fluids occurs you should immediately follow local reporting and testing procedures at your medical host if these are available. Otherwise, if the source patient cannot be tested OR if the source patient has HIV, you should immediately start your prophylactic regimen and return to the medical college for evaluation and treatment. You should continue taking the prophylaxis until your re-evaluation. Notify Weill Cornell Medicine Student Health Services as soon as you are able to do so, for reporting and evaluation.

Sample HIV Post-exposure Prophylaxis Regimen (CDC)

Truvada (fixed dose combination emtricitabine 200mg and tenofovir disoproxil 300mg) one tablet by mouth daily AND Isentress (raltegravir 400mg) one tablet by mouth twice a day.

Common side effects: The most common side effects are nausea and generally not feeling well. Other possible side effects include, but aren’t limited to, headaches, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea.
March 19, 2015

Summary

Just about everyone has a camera at his or her immediate disposal through a smartphone. It is not uncommon to want to immortalize certain individuals, experiences, sites, or scenery, especially when traveling abroad. However, individuals to be photographed might have religious or animist/indigenous beliefs that photographs steal the soul (particularly of children) or disrespect the spiritual world; gender roles may make photography difficult, precluding women from being photographed; and security apparatus (police and military) generally do not want to be photographed. Some people simply want to be paid for being photographed. However, foreign laws and customs governing what is permissible to photograph can vary vastly from U.S. norms.

Dos & Don’ts for Photography Abroad

Behavior that might be deemed inappropriate includes: lewd or lascivious acts, kissing, drinking alcohol, and immodest skin exposure. Edifices that might be deemed sensitive might include: government buildings, voting centers and processes, embassies, military facilities and vehicles (including airplanes), religious structures, and palaces. Scenery might include: war zones, sacred grounds, archeological sites, and tribal artifacts.

The use of the “selfie stick,” a telescoping rod to take photographs of oneself from approximately one meter’s distance, is banned in many locations, to include museums and art galleries, particularly in Europe.

Villagers in rural areas are sometimes suspicious of strangers, especially if they are not prone to seeing many people from outside their own community or country. There have been several incidents of violence in rural areas of Kenya, for instance, against Kenyan and foreign adults suspected of stealing children. Be aware that close contact with children, including taking their pictures or giving them gifts, can be viewed with deep alarm in some cultures, and may provoke panic and/or violence.

In some cases, anti-photography laws exist but are generally not pursued. For example, photographing the Eiffel Tower in Paris at night is technically a copyright infringement and, thus, illegal. Or, in Romania and Bulgaria, public buildings can be photographed, but those images cannot be sold. Further, in March 2014, Hungary made taking a photograph of people illegal unless everyone included has given permission; however, vagaries in the civil code leave room for interpretation.

Case Studies in 2014 and 2015

In mid-March 2015, OSAC staff members visited Turkmenistan and were told not to photograph government buildings, which are rarely clearly identified as such but are numerous in Ashgabat. After photographing carcasses in a meat market, they were approached and told not to do so again. The staff members left the stall but were overtly surveilled and followed by two men for some time.

Also in mid-March, Thailand made posting specific ‘selfies’ online, a trend common with female tourists, illegal under the Computer Crime Act, punishable by five years of jail time and a 100,000 baht (U.S.$3,035) fine.

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In early March, two U.S. citizens carved their names into Rome’s Coliseum walls and then photographed themselves and their act of vandalism. The two were arrested for aggravated damage and may face fines and jail time. The Coliseum has signage in English and Italian that defacing the structure is prohibited.

In early February 2015, U.S. sisters were arrested and deported from Cambodia for taking inappropriate photographs of themselves in the Preah Khan Angkor temple, a World Heritage site. They were charged with “indecent trafficking of pornography and exposing sexual organs.” The sisters were sentenced to a six-month suspended prison term, fined the equivalent of U.S.$315, and banned from the country for four years.

In October 2014, a U.S. citizen was arrested in the United Arab Emirates and charged with taking pictures of a restricted area. He was held in the al-Wathiba prison, charged, fined the equivalent of U.S.$135, and released after 29 days incarceration. The U.S. citizen was to speak at a conference and then travel on to Malaysia. However, as in many cases, the detention was allegedly not communicated to the Embassy or to his contacts, and only after the U.S. citizen did not appear in Malaysia days later did his friends become concerned and begin searching for him.

**Impact to Private Sector**

Depending on what country is involved, visitors who violate local law or custom can be detained for lengthy periods, charged stiff fines, and/or be declared persona non grata. Not knowing local laws and customs is not excusable in the eyes of the court or police. Further, photographic documentation of illegal activities can be used in most judicial trials, as was the case when a fish poacher photographed himself with an illegal weapon in Wales, U.K. Prisons overseas are not kept to U.S. standards, and prolonged detention under such conditions may lead to biological and psychological maladies. Further, should a detained individual be representing a corporate entity, an arrest could cause unwanted business tensions. The notoriety that would likely come, at least online if not in mainstream media, may be damaging personally, making future academic or professional pursuits challenging. For example, in March 2014, four U.S. citizens were arrested for ‘streaking’ at Machu Picchu in Peru, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They were photographed by other tourists, and these and other ‘streaking’ photographs and videos have circulated online. Peruvian Ministry of Culture authorities are increasing surveillance measures, requiring guides and specific routes, and cracking down on a behavior that tarnishes the ancient citadel.

**Guidance**

In tourist destinations, including museums or galleries, and near diplomatic buildings signs will often be posted if photography is not allowed. These signs generally have a traditional camera, or increasingly an image of a cell phone, with a red circle and single diagonal line (see right image). However, in other cases, there is no signage or it is unclear. A similar sign may restrict flash photography (see left image) or videography. When traveling overseas, it is always a good idea to ask an individual directly if he or she is agreeable to being photographed or to ask the authorities if photography is permitted in the area. Perusing OSAC Crime and Safety Reports is a best practice, as they often include information on photography.

**For Further Information**

For additional information on global diseases and pandemic outbreaks, please contact OSAC’s Health and Disease Analyst. For country-specific concerns, please contact the appropriate regional analyst.

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