

PREPARATION FOR GLOBAL HEALTH WORK



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DISCLOSURES

I have no relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies to disclose.

OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss key general elements of preparation for short term global health work
2. Focus on cultural awareness and communication
3. Suggest key steps to preparing for a career in global health

LESSONS LEARNED FROM STUDENTS

Source – debriefing of students returned from global health experience

Comparisons with U.S. health culture and health system

- Resources and diagnostic modalities available – “doing more with less”
- Role of alternative medicine – herbs, shamans, prayer, folk remedies
- Level of professionalism – different ways of expressing professionalism
- Whole person medicine and emotional support – differences in roles of physician, family, and community
- Value of comprehensive, continuous medical care that is both preventive and curative



MOST COMMON PERCEPTIONS & LESSONS – STUDENTS

- Observation and learning of cultural issues
 - Cultural issues “in your face” – cannot be ignored
 - Need for language fluency
 - Differences in privacy and personal space
 - Methods of expression of illness and symptoms
 - Causality of illness and disability
 - Role of religion and faith in health and illness

MOST COMMON PERCEPTIONS & LESSONS – STUDENTS

- Dealing with uncertainty and risk
 - Individuals in developing world much more exposed to and comfortable with uncertainty in life's events
 - Level of risk (illness, disease, injury, error) is higher but accepted by developing world
 - Local family and community are wonderful resources for dealing with unforeseen or negative events

INITIAL STEPS IN PREPARING FOR GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

- Review your motivations
- Consider your tolerance levels
- Ideal outcomes – What do you hope to gain?
- Where will you go?
- When will you go?

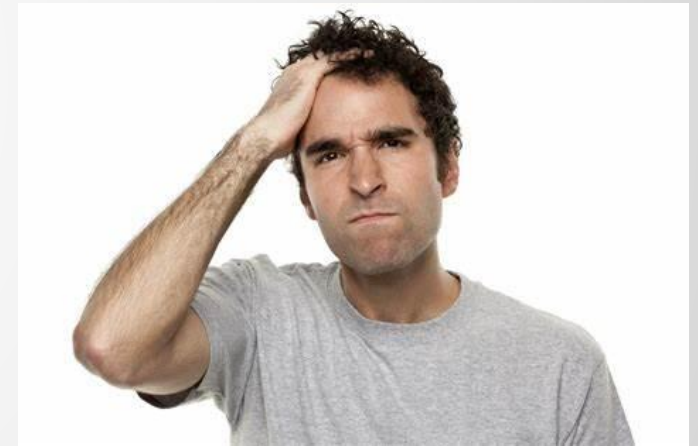


REVIEW YOUR MOTIVATIONS

- See the world and experience other cultures?
- Develop communication skills using interpreters and foreign languages?
- Enhance research and mentoring skills while helping the needy?
- Observe illnesses and surgical problems uncommon in the U.S.?
- Work in a simpler and more gratifying setting?
- Get a new perspective on U.S. medical issues?
- Encounter spiritual purpose and fulfillment?

CONSIDER YOUR TOLERANCE LEVEL FOR:

- Development and maintenance of new relationships
- Travel uncertainties and risks
- Uncomfortable living conditions
- Unaccustomed foods
- New cultural expectations
- Disease and injury exposure
- Frustration about limited ability to help others



WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?

- Self understanding of tolerance levels
- New skills and knowledge
- Academic credit
- Satisfaction that you can perform in exotic settings
- Direction for future learning emphases
- Experience level that opens doors for further opportunities

DECIDING WHERE TO GO

- Match your interests, goals and personal beliefs:
 - Clinical setting, local language, type of organization
- Determine your budgetary and time constraints
- Explore the internet and med. school resources
- Seek out someone who has been there recently
- Assess expectations for your work and free time
- Understand the principles and policies of the host



DECIDING WHEN TO GO

- Better later in your training for greater experience
- Consider the best season for the location
- Ask about anticipated personnel changes
- Anticipate potential disruptions and political instability
- Confirm the details about costs and payment dates
- Confirm local travel opportunities



ANTICIPATE POTENTIAL STRESS POINTS – CONTINGENCY PLANNING

- Communication difficulties with host and colleagues
- Expectations of activities and role
- Trip itinerary changes
- Connections within country
- Financial issues
- Personal safety risks
- Illness complications

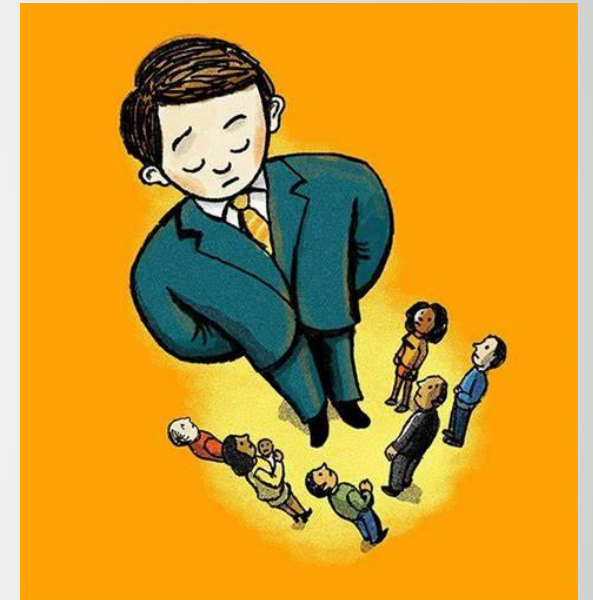


CULTURAL AWARENESS, SENSITIVITY, HUMILITY, AND COMPETENCE

- All of us can be **sensitive** and **aware** if we engage a new culture with **humility**.....
 - understanding that our knowledge is limited and often biased
 - working to show respect for each person we meet
- Reaching cultural **competence** is a life-long endeavor
 - achieved by few persons who enter from outside the culture and only stay for brief periods

FOUR DEGREES OF CULTURAL AWARENESS

- “My way is the only way.”
- “I know their way, but my way is better.”
- “My way and their way.”
- “Our way.”



Culturally aware interactions are ALWAYS
perceived as partnerships!

THE CULTURAL ICEBERG



Bennett, Milton J. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Summary. Intercultural Development Research Institute, Revised 2014.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

- Spirituality and religious issues
- Communication and interpersonal relationship styles
 - word choice, voice tone and volume, eye contact, physical distance, proper titles
- Time and time consciousness
- Role of community vs. individualism in decision-making and life events

COMMON ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

- Clothing, hair styles, and body adornment
- Food and eating habits
- Gender issues and perception of appropriate male/female interaction

EACH CULTURE IS UNIQUE

- Similar appearances (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) do not mean cultural similarity
- Sharing a language (e.g., English-speaking East Asia Indians, British, Nigerians, Americans) does not mean cultural similarity
- Sharing a nationality (e.g., New Yorkers, Hawaiians, Texans) does not mean cultural similarity
- Sharing a religion does not mean cultural similarity
- Even marriages are a blending of two different cultures!

STEPS TOWARD CULTURAL AWARENESS & SENSITIVITY

- Admit you don't know much about the new culture
- Suspend judgements and criticism
- Practice empathy with others
- Systematically check your assumptions
- Become comfortable with ambiguity



CULTIVATING CULTURAL HUMILITY

- A lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and ongoing learning from other cultures
- Appreciation of patients' expertise on the social and cultural context of their lives
- Recognition of personal attitudes of power, control, and authority, and reconfiguration of power imbalances
- Recognition of personal biases toward other cultural practices, and development of empathy toward individuals of that culture

Tervalon M, Murray-Garcia J. Cultural humility versus cultural competence: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 9: 117-124, 1998

PREPARATION FOR A CAREER IN GLOBAL HEALTH

- Lay the foundation with a series of short-term global experiences
 - Identify skills and lessons learned and note personal preferences after each experience
 - Develop a set of globally-needed skills and the professionalism to effectively teach them to others
 - Prepare your lifestyle to include intermittent consultative jobs in various countries
 - Develop a network of domestic and international and
- NOURISH THESE RELATIONSHIPS!**

PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

- Our effectiveness in building health capacity will be determined by the depth and strength of the individual relationships developed with local leaders, officials, and students
- We must constantly work to improve communication -
 - Between donor partners
 - Between U.S. and international partners
 - Within the partner institution



PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

- Don't do it alone – develop a network of partners at home and in-country
- We are present to help others develop – not demonstrate our superiority
 - Serve as a “guide on the side” rather than a “sage on the stage”
- Our greatest priority is to help our global colleagues build a sustainable, effective, and people-centered health system; not infrastructure
- We can most influence permanent, sustainable institutions by focusing on the key individuals that direct and serve within them

PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

- Consider cultural and developmental differences within your own expectations:
 - Time urgency
 - Computer culture
 - Decision-making hierarchy and process
 - Attitudes toward funding and resources
 - Priority of relationship over policy

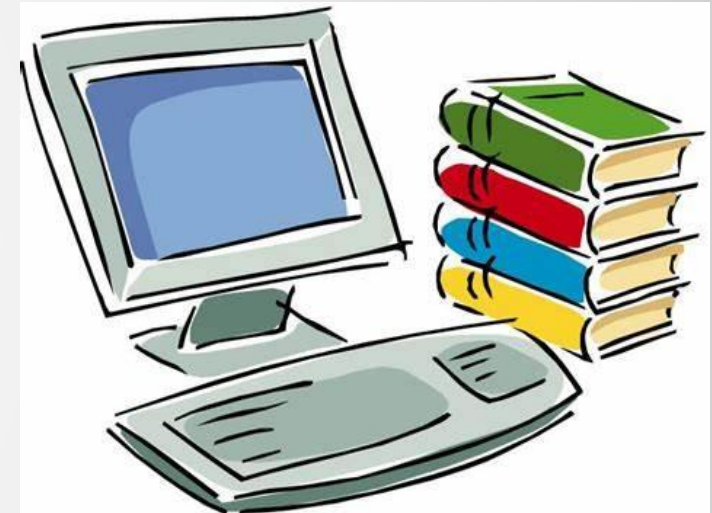


PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

- Promote local sustainability by:
 - Work toward full local sustainability from the **first day** of your involvement
 - Linkage with other regional resources and international resources
 - Insist on some local funding and resource contribution – **do not** provide all primary project funding
 - Follow the pace of the international partner – which is usually slower than our desired pace
 - Check for full partner agreement and commitment at every project step

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR TRAVEL INFORMATION

- CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- U.S. Dept of State: <http://www.state.gov>
- Library of Congress Country Studies:
<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs>
- CIA World Fact Book:
[http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/fact book](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/fact%20book)
- Lonely Planet: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS??