Global Surgery: Overcoming Common Challenges

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How to find a global surgery opportunity

- Operation giving back
- Global surgery fellowships
- Home institution
- Friends, colleagues, etc
“Goodness of Fit”

• What to look for when choosing a global surgery site…
  – Proper supervision
  – Good fit for skill set
  – Clinical versus research versus education
  – Global region – safety, environment, climate, language, culture
Before you go
Getting Time Away

• Negotiating job requirements
  – Using vacation vs. part of job description/contract

• What is the right amount of time?
  – How much time can you offer?
  – How much time is needed to achieve goals?

• What about my family?
Preparing to Go

• Visa, passport, vaccines, emergency evacuation insurance, health insurance
  – Pack over the counter meds/ snacks/ reusable bottles

• Home institution requirements
  – Register travel with institution, STEP program

• Know about local electrical voltage, options for internet access (consider bringing your own laptop with hotspot)
• Plan activities and trip goals in advance with your hosts
  – Offer a lecture or workshop
  – Bring needed medical supplies – check with hosts to know what supplies are needed
• Confirm arrival plan, have local contacts phone numbers
• Bring small gifts (pencils, hard candy) for children you may meet
• Top Ten Travel Tips for Global Surgery: https://www.aasurg.org/informational-videos/
General Guidelines
Expectations

• Goals of the trip
  – Personal
  – Career
  – Home institution
  – Host institution
Safety First

• Personal
  – Be aware of safety considerations by neighborhood
  – Do not travel alone, particularly at night

• Health
  – Use universal precautions
  – Bring sterile gloves, eye protection, handwash

• Traffic
  – Do not operate/ ride a motorcycle or bike
Barriers

• Cultural
  – Be respectful of local traditions (clothing, food)

• Language
Ethics

• Respect patient privacy
  – Do not take photos without permission
• Be respectful
  – Do not judge
  – Be willing to learn from your hosts
Working Clinically
Becoming a “Jack of all trades”

• Working outside scope of usual practice
  – Know your limitations
  – Prepare before you go: training courses, shadowing, etc

• Electronic surgical textbooks and operative manuals on your personal device (tablet or phone)

• Understand the options within the country
  – Referral patterns, other hospitals, visiting surgeons, etc
Is “standard of care” really standard?

- What you learned is not the only way to do things
  - Most textbooks don’t teach what to do when a patient arrives >12 hours after trauma, etc

- Differences in available resources can redefine “standards”

- Many different groups practicing in the same hospital
  - Other visiting medical teams may have different practices
Morbidity and Mortality in a Resource-Constrained Setting

- Patients are younger, but mortality rates are often higher
- Some conditions would otherwise be treatable in a high-resource setting
- Sometimes you will not be able to save the patient
Research in Global Surgery
Research collaborations

• Partner with and engage local researchers
• Teach medical students, residents about the research process
  – Data collection
  – Data analysis
  – Building tables
  – Publication process
IRB process

• You will need multiple IRB approvals
  – Local institution
  – Your home institution
• IRB approval takes time
  – Plan well in advance
• May cost money
Authorship

• Equity in authorship
• Adhere to ICMJE standards
• Engage local colleagues ensure that they have opportunity to contribute and be co-author
  – Consider small group discussions if difficulty with writing
Building a career in global surgery
Career

• Building a career in global surgery
  – International experience in medical school, residency
  – Global Surgery Fellowships
  – Masters in Public Health
  – Research experience
  – Language skills
  – Network with global surgeons
    • Global surgery/ global health meetings
Negotiating a job/contract

• What to look for in a job
  – Does the institution have an established international network/connections?
  – What are the department/division goals and agenda?
  – Are there multidisciplinary global activities?

• What support is needed
  – Funding: travel, research
  – Protected time (vs vacation time)
  – Administration
How to build a research career

• Support for research
  – Grants administration
  – Statistics
  – Logistics: at home institution and international site

• Funding opportunities
  – NIH: Fogarty
  – Career development awards
  – Society awards
  – Internal institutional funding