

JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
GLOBAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**Pre-Departure Preparation for Global Health Clinical and
Research Experiences:**

A Handbook for Health Professionals and Trainees

Global Health Leadership Program Committee

This committee is comprised of students, residents, fellows, and faculty with clinical, research, and educational global health experience. Importantly, the members of the committee are dedicated to providing the highest caliber global health experience for trainees.

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Introduction to the Handbook

Adequate pre-departure preparation is an integral part of a meaningful, productive, and safe international experience. This handbook aims to assist health professionals/trainees in their preparations for global health clinical and research experiences. It draws upon current global health education literature and existing handbooks from several institutions. Topics covered include navigating the logistics of international travel, staying safe and healthy while abroad, consideration of cultural differences, as well as issues relevant to selecting appropriate clinical and research opportunities/ international mentors and developing feasible projects. Examples of institution-specific resources and policies are based on those available at Johns Hopkins (JH), which can be used as a guide for users to seek similar resources at their home institutions. Additionally, the handbook includes lists of pre-departure action items, a packing list, relevant national and international websites, and suggested readings. Users are encouraged to make full use of their available institutional, national and international resources as they consider the issues relevant to travel abroad. The handbook is intended to provide a general framework for users to build upon as they make their preparations for departure.

Section 1: Before you go - General topics

Familiarizing yourself with your country of interest prior to departure can save time and prevent frustration later in your experience. Your home institution, partner organization/ international site, and internet resources such as the U.S. State Department website can provide information regarding your country of interest. Any potential travel warnings can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

Four to six months prior to departure

1. Learn about the country and culture (See also **Section 2: Preparing yourself mentally**). Thoroughly research your host country, exploring climate, politics, culture, religion, and history. This information will help with everything from packing appropriately to integrating better with your colleagues and neighbors. Gather data regarding how your gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics may impact your daily life and the success of your work. People are likely to appreciate even a small effort on your part to be polite in their native language.
 - a. **Correspond early:** One of the best ways to learn about your host country is to talk with people who live there or others who have traveled there previously. If possible, correspond either via phone, email, or Skype with your colleagues in your host country prior to traveling there. They may have insights regarding travel/trip preparations and logistics, and they can help prepare you for what to expect from your experience.
 - b. **Dos and Don'ts:** Try to learn in advance important dos and don'ts for the country to which you are traveling. However, one of the best ways to learn these is to observe them in your host country with as little prejudice as possible. For example, politics may be an inappropriate, even hazardous, topic of conversation. Abortions are not tolerated in some countries. If you see a woman with a complication you suspect is secondary to induced abortion, be considerate with your diagnosis as she might end up in jail. Recognize that the freedoms of speech and political expression to which you are accustomed may not be universal.
2. Familiarize yourself with the organization/ international site with which you will be working. Take the time to learn about the organization/ international site with which you will be working. If there are other individuals from your institution who have worked in this organization/ international site, ask them for helpful hints regarding personalities and institutional culture.

3. **Obtain Official Documents.** These documents include visas, passport, plane tickets, and documentation of your project and mentor. For each of these documents, **carry an extra copy separate from the originals**, and consider scanning copies and emailing them to your own email and a trusted contact stateside. Travel with the expectation that you might not be able to get to an internet source or printer easily.
 - a. **Letter of introduction:** Having a letter from the Minister of Health, head of the host international site/medical institution, or your international mentor both proves to immigration staff that you have a legitimate purpose in their country and documents your mentor's commitment to work with you.
 - b. **Visas:** A visa is required to enter many countries. Call or check the website of the embassy of the country you are visiting. Visas, if necessary, should be obtained well in advance of your travel. Go to the embassy in person if you have a problem obtaining a visa. A tourist visa is often all that is needed for your length of stay, but research the time allotted for a tourist visa to ensure it will not expire during your stay. Costs and processing times may be significant, so start this process early! Make sure to follow up once your visa application is submitted to confirm that the embassy has received all necessary paperwork.

A transit visa may also be needed for transit through some countries even if you only change flights. This may be available at the transit airport. Check the transit country embassy website and the airport website well in advance of departure.

c. **Passports:**

If you do not have a passport, allow several months before your planned trip to apply for a passport; during peak application times it can take up to 10-12 weeks to receive the final document in the mail. Expedited service is available at additional cost. Facilities that process passports include many federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries, and a number of county and municipal offices. Many institutions will have a department that can provide passport/visa photos quickly and inexpensively (JH: School of Medicine Pathology Photography & Computer Graphic Department (<http://photography.jhu.edu/> 410-955-3843)). It is prudent to have extra copies of passport photos as they may be required for other paper work once you enter the country.

If you have a passport it must be valid for the full time that you will be away. Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six (6) months beyond the anticipated dates of your trip.

International students/residents/fellows studying in the USA: if you are a non-U.S. passport holder, pay extra attention to your planning. It is **very important** to visit your institution's international student office (JH: Office of International Student, Faculty and Staff Services) to discuss the appropriate documents for leaving the USA as well as arriving back into the country.

- d. **Round-trip airline tickets** - Do not travel with a one-way ticket, as you may be restricted from entering your destination country upon arrival, and you may have difficulty securing airline tickets for a return flight while away. Purchasing two one-way flight tickets separately is often more expensive than the cost of changing the date on the return portion of a two-way ticket. Additionally, many countries have **exit taxes** when you leave the country. Check with your local coordinator to see if this applies to the country you are going to, and if so, bring sufficient cash to pay on departure at the airport.
4. If you plan on conducting research, plan early (See also **Section 3: Clinical and research specifics**). IRB acceptance can be a long process. Your research mentor(s) at your home institution and host/ international site can guide you in this process. If you plan on collecting data while at the international site, you must find the requirements for the IRB analog in your host country (e.g., Human Research Ethics Committee). IRB approval at your home institution and at the international site should be obtained before departure.

Two to three months prior to departure

1. Make preparations to ensure your personal health while abroad. For your own health, check with the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/vaccinations.aspx>) and make sure you are up to date for the recommended **vaccines** for the country you are visiting. Proof of having received certain vaccines may also be required in order to enter your destination (e.g. Yellow Fever).
 - a. **Travel Clinic:** Most institutions have a travel clinic that will provide pre-travel assessment, administer vaccination(s), and counsel you regarding personal health matters and risks (JH: Travel Medicine Clinic (Tel: 410-955-8931)). Often, the cost for the clinic visit and vaccinations may be covered by your institution (JH: Darnell Williams, JH University Health and Benefits Office (Tel: 410-955-3872) regarding travel medicine visits and vaccines coverage). Schedule an appointment approximately two months before your departure - even if you are a seasoned traveler. Bring a copy of your vaccination record to this visit

- b. **Preventative measures and medicines:** This information will be specific to the country or countries you are going to visit, including information on safe eating and drinking, sun protection, malaria prophylaxis, antibiotic supply for traveler's diarrhea, and spotting the symptoms of serious disease. You may be able to obtain this information from a travel clinic.
 - c. **Health Insurance:** Check to be sure that your health insurance will cover you when you are overseas; there is great variety in coverage among personal plans. Medical evacuation is covered if you obtain an ISOS membership (See below #2).
 - d. **Personal Medications:** Carry an adequate supply of required medicines (both prescription and over-the-counter) with you in your carry-on luggage. To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Consider items such as contact solution, insulin syringes, and lancets as medication to be brought with you - they may be difficult to find abroad. Beware that counterfeit medications may be sold in pharmacies and clinics in many developing nations; it is safest to bring a sufficient supply of your medications to last your whole time abroad.
 - e. **Special Issues:** Be aware that attitudes toward, accommodation for, and treatment of medical conditions, disabilities, and psychological conditions vary by culture and under the laws of the host countries. These cultural and legal differences impact the level of treatment and accommodation available abroad. You should give serious consideration to your individual health and personal circumstances when deciding to work abroad. For example, people with physical disabilities may not be able to get around easily in some countries and emergency care for psychological conditions may not be readily available.
 - f. **Crime and Safety:** The Department of State's country-specific information sheets are available for every country of the world (<http://www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm>). The most convenient source of information about travel and consular services is the Consular Affairs home page (<http://travel.state.gov>).
2. **Contact International SOS (Evacuation, and Health Insurance Information).** ISOS provides international medical, security and travel assistance while abroad (<http://www.internationalsos.com>). Many institutions have a central subscription and you may be able to get coverage from your institution or it may already be covered for you. (JH: To obtain your ISOS "card," go to the Johns Hopkins purchasing website: http://www.jhu.edu/purchasing/travel/intl_sos.pdf. The "card" provides emergency contact numbers. You can then use the membership number from the card to log into the Johns Hopkins pages of ISOS to get specific information.)

One to two months prior to departure

1. Make a list of important contacts. Before you leave, identify people and organizations that might be helpful to you in case a difficulty arises while you are away. You may want to leave a copy of this information with someone at home, as well. Include names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and street addresses for the following:
 - a. International Supervisor/Mentor
 - b. The U.S. Embassy in the country you are visiting
 - c. Hotel/lodging information
2. Complete travel registration.
 - a. **U.S. Embassy/Consulate:** It is important that you can be located in case of an emergency. If you are a U.S. citizen, consider registering at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country you are visiting. This allows a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. To register, go to the State Department website (http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html).
 - b. **Home institution travel registry:** As an added precaution, many institutions have a travel registry with which you can file your itinerary (JH: Johns Hopkins International Travel Registry: <https://travelregistry.johnshopkins.edu/Travel>. If you are funded by the JH Center for Global Health your trip will be added to the registry automatically. However, you will need to add profile information and your itinerary).
3. Prepare financially. Research online and discuss with your contacts to help budget for your trip. It will be important to determine how you will access cash for daily expenses. Generally, keeping a large amount of cash with you is not recommended. On the other hand, access to ATMs varies greatly from country-to-country and in some cases may only be available in larger cities.
 - a. **Traveler's checks:** Traveler's checks may be accepted at banks and destinations in cities but often not in rural areas. Be sure you will be able to access money when you need it.
 - b. **U.S. currency:** If you elect to bring some U.S. currency, it is recommended to bring new or relatively new bills (printed in the last 5 years) that are in good condition. In some countries banks/cash exchange kiosks have been concerned about the ability to rule out counterfeit bills among older bills and will refuse to exchange any old bills.
 - c. **U.S. banks and credit card companies:** Contact banks and credit card companies to alert them of your planned travel because often the bank will hold/cancel your

card if it detects foreign activity. Credit card companies often charge foreign transaction fees, but there are some cards/companies that waive those fees. You should also set up a PIN for credit cards before you travel.

Investigate your destination to determine if ATMs are generally available or not, and if they are safe to use. Be aware of how much your bank charges for international ATM withdrawals. Specifically, what is the exchange rate and what percentage of each withdrawal/flat rate do they take as a fee? Keep in mind that some of the added costs of ATM withdrawals may be offset by the better exchange rates often available from ATMs as well as the security of not carrying around a large amount of cash.

4. Investigate communication options to keep in touch with friends, family, and colleagues in the United States.
 - a. **Local calling cards and cell phones:** Calling cards and similar schemes may be available in-country, and cell phone service is almost universally available in most developing countries. Buying or renting a basic phone may be reasonable with a local SIM card and service plan; alternately, you may be loaned a phone by your host organization.
 - b. **U.S. cell phones:** You may consider bringing a cell phone for your trip. However, many cell phones operating in the U.S. will not work in Europe and Africa, for example. Some newer phones such as the Blackberry Tour can accept a SIM card for calling in-country but must be “unlocked” from your current service provider’s system. See the resources appendix for more details.
 - c. **Laptop computer:** Weigh the benefit of taking your laptop against the potential for theft and availability of internet service. Internet service in some countries is spotty; big cities tend to have more service than rural areas. You will often have to pay for internet access and this might take up a considerable amount of your budget. Therefore do not count on continuous access (do not count on ‘the Cloud’), and have all you need downloaded on your computer and on a separate hard drive/USB stick. If you have your laptop and have reliable internet, Skype (www.skype.com) is a great and relatively inexpensive option of keeping in touch. Many developing countries have telecommunication providers that sell USB modems that connect with local 3G/4G data networks available as options for Internet connectivity.

5. Finalize in-country logistics.
 - a. **Housing:** Staff at the host/ international site or individuals at your U.S. institution may have suggestions for safe, suitable housing. Consider cost, proximity to your international site/ medical institution, neighborhood safety, and transportation options when deciding on a place to stay. Identify how you will pay for housing - on-site or ahead of time. If you plan to pay ahead of time, it is best to work through a trusted intermediary.
 - b. **In-Country Transportation:** How will you get from the airport to your housing? From housing to the worksite? Work with in-country staff to arrange transport.
6. Packing planning. Review TSA rules in preparation for your trip (see resources appendix). In particular, pay attention to the rules for carry-on contents and parameters for checked luggage. Don't forget to read your individual airline's rules as well.
 - a. **Carry-on luggage:** A carry-on bag that is comfortable to hold for long periods of time (something that is ergonomic such a backpack or a rolling bag with backpack straps, and/or a bag with a detachable smaller bag) is a good purchase for travelers who will need to carry research materials while "in the field." Also, if your baggage is lost in transit, having a carry-on with some necessary items is a good idea. Pack one copy of your important documents, medications, key toiletries, any valuables, and a change of clothes in your carry-on.
 - b. **Appropriate attire:** It is important to consider what is appropriate attire for your destination. For example, in some countries, it may not be appropriate for women to wear clothing that exposes legs. It may only be appropriate for men to wear shorts while exercising.
 - c. **Pictures and gifts:** Consider bringing pictures of your family and postcards of your hometown with you. Sharing your life with colleagues/friends breaks down cultural barriers and builds friendships and cultural understanding. Small gifts from America for home-stay families, in-country mentors, or new friends are useful and don't take up much luggage space.
 - d. **Medical/research equipment:** You can inquire from your international mentor/ supervisor if there are portable medical equipment or supplies that you can bring from the U.S. Also consider if you will need to bring your own personal protective equipment (e.g. N95 medical mask, post-exposure HIV prophylaxis).
 - e. **Electrical:** Only bring electrical devices that are essential to your work and wellbeing. Buy plug adaptors and current converters in the U.S. as they can be difficult to find abroad.

Section 2: Before you go - Preparing yourself mentally

One of the most challenging aspects of traveling and working internationally can be adapting to your new living and working environment. The more information you have about your destination, the better you will be able to mentally prepare for your trip and for the challenges you may face. The purpose of this section is not to present an exhaustive list of topics to consider; rather, it is a launching point to begin thinking about issues that may not be directly pertinent to travel plans and logistical preparations.

1. Cross-cultural preparation. “Culture” is a complex concept that includes the underlying values and assumptions of a society and how those are expressed in behavior. Preparing to live and work in another culture includes both learning about the values, beliefs, and practices in the place you will be going and comparing them to your own. The goal of this portion of the handbook is to introduce some of the general issues related to cross-cultural preparation. Additional reading is highly recommended, including reading about the specific country where you will be traveling.

Outward behaviors reflect internal values and beliefs about:

- The concept of self
- The relationship between self and other individuals, and between self and society
- The relationship between humans and nature
- Religion
- Concepts of fairness and justice
- General worldview

These internal values and beliefs are reflected outwardly in:

- Facial expressions, gestures
- Style of dress
- Food and eating habits
- Social etiquette
- Childrearing practices

Note that two people from two different cultures may view the same behavior very differently. For example, corporal punishment may be acceptable in some places though it is not considered acceptable in the United States. Our own culture affects how we interpret the behavior of others.

2. Prepare to be uncomfortable. During your time abroad, you will likely encounter situations when you feel uncomfortable physically, emotionally, or both. While not an exhaustive list, here are a few things to consider.
 - a. **Climate:** Thoroughly investigate the climate of your destination. For example, you may be exposed to high temperatures and humidity levels, and in many areas air conditioning is not available or electricity may be intermittent. If the timing of your travel is flexible, consider the season when making your plans. For example, during wet season in some places, roads may become impassable.
 - b. **Food:** No matter your destination, your diet will likely be very different from that in your home country. Be aware that it may be difficult to accommodate certain food limitations, such as Veganism, in some countries. Furthermore, turning down a host's offer of food can be considered disrespectful in some settings.
 - c. **Social interactions:** Cultural differences between you and those around you undoubtedly will lead to unfamiliar social interactions. For example, local people may be unaccustomed to seeing foreigners, especially those who live in rural areas. Children may follow you around or request to take photographs with you. (NB: Always ask permission before you photograph any person or their belongings.)
 - d. **Ethical dilemmas:** Ethical issues of different types and magnitude may be encountered while abroad. You may realize many economic, social, and ethical disparities between you, your international colleagues, and the local population. In some cases, your presence may lead to the reallocation of scarce resources. Local colleagues, patients, and strangers may ask you for financial assistance; alternatively, you may feel the need to offer financial assistance. You are encouraged to think about these situations before your departure.
3. Gift giving and reciprocity. In some cultures, it may be appropriate and even expected to give a gift at the beginning and/or the end of the trip. Consider contacting colleagues from your institution with experience working in your intended international setting for ideas on appropriate gifts. It is also important to consider how to enable reciprocal learning experiences for your international colleagues. Many U.S. medical institutions and U.S. national and international medical organizations offer competitive scholarships/ grants to fund clinical shadowing/ research experiences in the U.S. (and other countries) for medical practitioners of all levels, from students to faculty. Additionally, after returning to your home institution, you may continue to engage with your international colleagues by providing them with support in the form of emailing articles, proof reading manuscripts, statistical analysis, etc.
4. Expect the unexpected. No amount of research or reading can fully prepare you for all that you will experience while abroad. Being nervous is normal and expected; be prepared to expect the unexpected. However, being well informed prior to your arrival can help to make your transition as smooth as possible.

Section 3: Before you go - Clinical and research specifics

The same principles that guide your domestic research and medical practice should apply as you plan your global health work. Consider the following facets of your project:

- **Ethical Principles:** First, do no harm. Basic tenets of medical ethics apply: justice, beneficence, and autonomy. In addition, consider how to carry out your research or clinical practice in a sustainable way that allows for reciprocity between your institution and the host country. Can you find a way to build capacity- not just at your project site, but within your home institution? Research projects should be appropriate to the host country setting. Mechanisms for patient/research participant follow-up should also be considered.
- **Professionalism:** You represent your institution, your field, and your country. Maintain professionalism in your personal presentation and in interactions with others.
 - In addition to meeting American standards of professionalism, keenly observe colleagues and ask trusted mentors how else you can present yourself as a professional in your host setting.
- **Gender Issues:** Consider the potentially different gender roles as you plan your work in a different culture. How will you have to modify your clinical practice to make it culturally appropriate? For example, are there opportunities to advocate for women's rights within your project?

1. Preparing for clinical experiences.

- a. **Medical knowledge:** Familiarize yourself with common medical and surgical conditions encountered at your international site. Recognize that the approach to diseases and treatment may be very different from that at your home institution.
 - i. You may also want to gain a general understanding of common health care challenges that may be encountered in rural communities with limited resources along with locally available treatment options ([Where There Is No Doctor: A Village Health Care Handbook](#) (David Werner, Hesperian Society, May 2009; available at www.amazon.com).

- b. **Clinical protocols:** If possible, contact the preceptor at the international host institution to obtain information/protocols on common clinical practices. If there are major discrepancies between your practice patterns and their practices, this will allow you to familiarize yourself with practices there as well as discuss these practices with the preceptor and/or do further reading on specific topics. If no such protocols exist, after discussion with the onsite preceptor, it may be prudent to take existing protocols from your home institution and modify them as appropriate for the international setting.
 - c. **Skills practice:** Although it is important to only perform procedures that you are qualified and feel appropriate to perform (with appropriate supervision depending on your level of training), you may have to brush up on procedures you do not routinely perform. This may be accomplished either in the clinical setting at your home institution or in a simulation setting.
2. Research project development.
- a. **Identify contacts and mentors:** If one has not already been identified, establish a primary contact at your project site. If possible, find a mentor either locally within your institution who does work at that site or a faculty member based at the project site. As the planning and implementation of projects is often time consuming and will likely far exceed the duration of your international rotation, it is important to plan well before you arrive onsite. Work with your mentor to establish achievable time lines and reasonable goals and expectations.
 - b. **Perform a needs assessment:** With your mentor's assistance, identify stakeholders and potential partners and perform a resource and needs assessment. Resist the temptation to fit local needs to your project of interest. Instead, assess for areas of perceived needs or opportunities for improvement in the community/ current medical practice and design your project to accommodate them.

It is important to note that some of the most useful projects may not be a typical research project but may be a quality assurance/improvement project or development of new clinical program/patient-centered initiative.

- c. **Project Design:** In designing your study, keep in mind the results of the resource and needs assessment and make sure the study protocol is culturally appropriate. Check with your mentor and in-country partners throughout this process to ensure that your project is culturally and practically feasible and likely to be useful to stakeholders.
- i. Develop a timeline with well-defined, objective, attainable goals.
 - ii. Develop a budget and seek funding opportunities.
 - iii. Determine and finalize project specifications, and establish a mechanism for real-time feedback.

IRB approval will likely have to be obtained at your home institution and at the partnering institution.

- d. **Project Implementation:** Verify local travel and housing arrangements, locate and mobilize local resources to implement the project, and introduce the project to the community.
- e. **Project Evaluation:** The design phase of your project is the time to consider how you will evaluate your data and monitor progress. Evaluate the project using multiple perspectives: functional (how well project will carry out its proposed function), capacity (how the project will affect community members), and relational (how the project affects relationships between project staff). Although project evaluation is crucial at the end of a project, take the time to design your work in a way that facilitates evaluation and eventual publication (if that is your goal).

Section 4: At your destination

This section includes some information about things you can do to stay safe once you reach your destination.

1. Personal Health.

- a. **Mosquito Precautions:** Mosquitoes are vectors of serious illnesses in the developing world. Following mosquito precautions is advisable in areas where malaria, dengue, and other mosquito-borne infections are prevalent. Precautions include the application of repellants and use of bed nets.
- b. **Food and Water:** Tap water may not be potable. Avoid ice made from tap water and fruits and vegetables that cannot be boiled, cooked, or peeled. Find out whether you need to boil and/or filter your tap water, and avoid sources of water that may not be safe. Only trust bottled water that has an intact seal when you purchase it. In general, it may be most prudent to avoid any street food in many countries or at the very least, avoid street food that isn't well-heated and any other food that may have been handled improperly or exposed to flies.
- c. **Self-Help/ Minor Injuries:** Carry a first aid kit. If an accident does occur, seek medical care quickly and early.
 - i. It is especially important that you avoid unsterile needles and syringes. In many cases you can request to purchase a new needle or syringe, or have someone with you do so.
- d. **Additional Health Support:** International SOS and the U.S. Embassy maintain a list of medical providers in most countries. If you need medical care evacuation, you should contact ISOS. You should also get word back to your advisor and family if an accident occurs. Try to have an advocate with you any time you receive medical care. A health care provider who will see to your best interests, a traveling companion or, at a minimum, someone who speaks the local language, can serve as a valuable ally in an emergency.

2. Safety and Crime.

Accidents/Injuries: Accidents, especially related to travel, are the most likely health risk that you will face.

- a. Do not drive a vehicle while on your trip.
- b. Avoid traveling at night.
- c. Do not ride on bicycles or motorcycles, including motorcycle taxis.
- d. Avoid public buses that seem overly crowded or those without seatbelts, especially for long distances.
- e. When you travel by car use a seatbelt, and tell the driver to slow down if you feel unsafe. It is better to risk social embarrassment and avoid an accident. You may want to establish a maximum driving speed before you depart. You should also tell the driver to avoid passing (overtaking) if you feel that he/she is being unsafe.

Crime: As an outsider, you are a target. Minimize risks with the following precautions.

- a. Prepare your routes before setting out. Avoid studying your map in the street; you will be broadcasting the fact that you don't know where you are.
- b. Don't wear expensive clothing or jewelry or carry expensive cameras. Carry your laptop only if you must.
- c. Avoid clothing that declares your nationality or political beliefs.
- d. Do not allow anyone you don't know to lead you to a deserted area or away from a public place.
- e. Avoid alleys, poorly-lit streets, walking alone at night, lonely beaches, and crossing bridges on foot at night (thieves can hide under bridges and then trap you in the middle of the bridge).
- f. Beware of pickpockets, especially in crowded stations, busy streets and marketplaces.
- g. Distribute your cash about your person. Don't keep it all in your wallet, purse, or one pocket.
- h. Use a money belt or pouch. Keep a small amount of cash in a pocket with a closure for easy access.
- i. Keep one hand free to protect yourself and your valuables. Specific targets for thieves are shoulder bags, outside pouches of backpacks, and cameras that hang from straps. Wear them under a jacket or shirt so they are less accessible to thieves. If possible, carry your backpack on the front. Do not hand your luggage or personal belongings to anyone you cannot directly supervise or observe.

- j. If there is safe storage at your residence, keep your passport hidden there but carry a copy directly on your person. If there is not safe storage, carry your passport directly on your person.
- k. Avoid being intoxicated on the street/ in public.
- l. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. If you are lost, step into a shop and seek directions.
- m. Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood. Locate the nearest police station, hospital or clinic, shops and restaurants.
- n. Get to know your neighbors, if appropriate. They may be able to help you in an emergency.
- o. Avoid large crowds and places where foreigners might gather to decrease the risk of being a victim of terrorism.

3. Logistics.

Money

- a. Be cautious about changing money into the local currency from unauthorized people or companies. Official foreign exchange bureaus or banks may offer a slightly less favorable exchange rate, but are much safer.
- b. Never keep all your money with you. Carry a reasonable amount for a day's expenses, and store the remainder in a secure place.

Public Transportation

- a. Use only "registered" taxis or call in advance for taxi from a reliable agency, recognizing that there may be a price differential.
- b. Negotiate the fee before entering the taxi.
- c. When using taxis, pay the driver after you get out of the vehicle.
- d. Carry money in small denominations at all times. Taxi and bus drivers may not be able to or may not want to make change for large bills.
- e. Avoid overcrowded public transportation, when possible.
- f. Don't accept food/drink offerings; they may contain sedatives to induce sleep and allow you to be robbed.
- g. Keep your luggage locked and in your view at all times.
- h. Beware of false porters who may disappear with your luggage.

4. Personal Behavior.

Drugs and Alcohol

- a. Drug possession and use is a serious violation of the law in many countries. To avoid criminal, health, and safety issues do not use drugs and avoid those who do.
- b. Limit your alcohol consumption. As with many customs, cross-cultural differences exist with regard to the consumption of alcohol. Keep in mind that being under the influence of alcohol impairs judgment and increases your chances of being the victim of a crime. In addition, drunken behavior discredits you, your U.S. institution, and your in-country colleagues and mentors.

Sexual Activity

- a. Depending upon the country you visit, sexual activity between visitors and citizens may be viewed negatively. Don't let your after-hours behavior hamper your efficacy at work.
- b. The risk of HIV acquisition in some countries is many times higher than in the U.S. Carry condoms and make their use non-negotiable. Consider obtaining post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV before your trip.
- c. Certain heterosexual or homosexual public displays of affection may be considered inappropriate in some settings/cultures/countries. Homosexuality in general may not be well tolerated and may even result in criminal consequences in some countries. Therefore, until you know the people/ surroundings/country well, it may be prudent to be discrete regarding your sexual preferences and practices.

Appendix A: Pre-Travel Action List

Four to six months prior to departure

- Verify or obtain passport
- Obtain visa
- Begin development of research project

Two to three months prior to departure

- Obtain project IRB at home institution and international institution
- Formulate project timeline
- Coordinate supplies needed for your project
- Schedule medical consultation/vaccine administration
- Verify your health insurance coverage for international medical care and obtain supplements as necessary/desired
- Learn about health and disease prevention measures specific to your destination country
- Learn about crime and specific safety recommendations specific to your destination country
- Learn about and plan for your lodging and subsistence including cash flow matters

One to two months prior to departure

- Make copies of your passport, visa, plane tickets, credit cards and other important documents - **GIVE A COPY TO YOUR FAMILY OR TRUSTED FRIEND BEFORE YOU TRAVEL**
- Organize your medical/health supplies and needs
- Register your travel with the embassy
- Register your travel with Johns Hopkins International Travel Registry (JHITR) (see Appendix C)
- Take care of personal finances (set loans, credit cards, etc. to auto-pay while you are gone)
- Forward your mail, if necessary

Appendix B: Packing Checklist

Clothing: Your choices should take into account your destination's climate, your work setting, and cultural norms regarding gender-appropriate dress. Shorts and miniskirts, in particular, might not be appropriate. If you are unsure of these parameters, research them before packing to prevent frustration upon your arrival!

- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Umbrella; Jacket/ raincoat (climate dependent)
- Handkerchief
- Gloves, scarves, earmuffs, beanies, etc.
- Undergarments
- Pants (dress and jeans)
- Shorts (weather and culture permitting)
- Shirts (T-shirts, blouses, and dress shirts)
- Socks (climate dependent)
- Shoes (sneakers, dress shoes, boots, sandals/flip-flops)
- Pajamas
- Suit and tie (if necessary for work interactions or presentations)
- White coat, scrubs

Food: Taking a few food items to help adjust before beginning to try the local food may be a good idea. Note that some countries may place restrictions on what foods can be brought into the country. The following items are non-perishable and easy to pack:

- Granola and protein bars
- Fruit snacks/ nuts/ trail mix
- Peanut butter or cheese crackers
- Animal crackers
- Oral rehydration/ electrolyte packets (or flavor packets to improve the taste of boiled water)
- Instant oatmeal/ breakfast cereal
- Instant coffee
- Instant noodles, Mac and Cheese, etc

Toiletries: Inquire with your predecessors or in-country colleagues to determine whether the following are available. If possible, you may buy them at your destination and save luggage space!

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Soap, shampoo and conditioner
- Shaving equipment
- Contact lens equipment or glasses
- Deodorant
- Nail clippers/ tweezers
- Moisturizer
- Sunscreen and after-sun cream
- Lip balm
- Tampons and pads
- Makeup
- First aid kit
- Toilet paper
- Mosquito repellent
- Hand sanitizer (include a pocket-size container)
- Medications e.g. anti-inflammatory, anti-diarrheal capsules, and malaria prophylaxis. Keep a list of your medications.

Administrative/project supplies: Again, research local availability prior to committing luggage space.

- Address list and list of important contacts or numbers (paper copies, e-copy)
- Laptop (with up-to-date anti-virus software)
- Flash drive
- Notebook
- Writing utensils
- Personal protective equipment/project-specific supplies or equipment
- Passport, visas, tickets (plane, bus, train, etc.), travel insurance, and picture ID. (Don't forget to have hard and soft copies on your person and with someone stateside.)
- Vaccination cards
- ATM card and credit card (notify companies of your travel, research ATM availability)
- Cash in the local currency of your arrival destination
- Cash in U.S. dollars for exchange

Accommodations: Check to see if you will require these before going.

- Sheets and pillows/ sleeping bag
- Light blanket
- Face and body towels
- Pillow

Miscellaneous:

- UNLOCKED cell phone with SIM card, if possible as certain U.S. cellular companies will not unlock phones. It may be easier and relatively inexpensive to purchase a cellular phone at your international location
- Inexpensive watch/ alarm clock
- Camera, film and batteries. Consider spare flash cards or memory for digital cameras
- Electrical adapter and plug converter (check the type of electricity and plugs of the host country before leaving)
- Bottle opener
- Mosquito net (if necessary and not locally available)
- Wet wipes/ anti-bacterial wipes
- Re-sealable bags
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Batteries
- Umbrella
- Local guidebook
- Language resources
- Gifts (pens, pencils, postcards from home)

Entertainment:

- Books/e-readers (but be aware of possible electricity scarcity)
- Games and puzzles
- Headphones
- Playing cards
- Journal

Appendix C: Resources

1. CDC vaccination information: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/vaccinations.aspx>
2. State Department travel registration website:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html Information on individual countries: <http://www.state.gov/misc/list/index.htm>
3. Consular Affairs: <http://travel.state.gov>
4. MasterCard ATM Locator:
<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>
5. Visa ATM Locator: <http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global>
6. Unlocking domestic cell phones:
http://www.pcworld.com/article/135768/joys_of_unlocked_cell_phones.html
7. Rules for carry-ons and checked luggage: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm> (Also check your individual airline's policies.)
8. http://www.hopkinsglobalhealth.org/travel_grants/travel_info/index.html - Resources from the Center for Global Health (CGH) at Johns Hopkins. Contains other useful links. This guide was adapted from the CGH overseas student handbook, which can be found at this link - please refer to this for more in-depth information if you desire.
9. Johns Hopkins International Travel Registry:
<https://travelregistry.johnshopkins.edu/Travel>
10. <http://globalhealtheducation.org/resources/SitePages/Home.aspx> - Resources from University of California San Francisco School of Medicine
11. <http://ethicsandglobalhealth.org/index.shtml> - Contains practice ethical cases to help you learn about some ethical dilemmas that can occur while abroad.
12. <http://globalreach.med.umich.edu/> - Resources from University of Michigan
13. <http://www.ampathkenya.org/participants> - Resources from Indiana University/ Moi University/ AMPATH
14. Cross-cultural preparation: <http://www.culturecrossing.net/index.php> may provide helpful information. (The accuracy of the information on this website has not been verified.)

Appendix D: References/ Suggested Readings

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