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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

The background features several light blue, semi-transparent geometric shapes that resemble stylized architectural elements or a modern interior design. These shapes are arranged in a row, with varying heights and widths, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, consistent with the AAS branding.

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
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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, hand wash
- Traffic
 - Do not operate/ ride a motorcycle or bike

Barriers

- Cultural
 - Be respectful of local traditions (clothing, food)
- Language



- 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

- 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

- 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