

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Society for Academic Emergency Medicine's Global Emergency Medicine Academy: Global Health Elective Code of Conduct

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The number of residents and medical students participating in global health electives in emergency medicine has exponentially increased in recent years. Global health electives remain a strong recruitment tool and can contribute to trainee education. However, as the number of trainees undertaking international experiences and the field of global emergency medicine grows, so has the need to develop acceptable standards of behavior in the international setting; members of the Global Emergency Medicine Academy (GEMA) noted the absence of universal recommendations or guidelines for these experiences.¹⁻³ A group of GEMA members volunteered to take on the task of producing a document that could be used for trainees when undertaking a global health elective. The authors hail from a variety of different institutions and have a diverse range of training levels and international experiences. In developing this document, we conducted a systematic literature review for any information on code of conduct/professionalism^{4,5} when working in the international setting; we also reviewed similar documents from numerous institutions^{6,7} across different specialties⁸ and searched the gray literature.⁹ Selected key references are given below. This information was combined to produce a single document, which was revised using a consensus methodology until it was agreed upon by all members of the group.

The resulting document is shown in Table 1. We encourage institutions engaged in trainee education to adopt this as a standard part of their global health preparation.

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Table 1
Society for Academic Emergency Medicine's Global Emergency
Medicine Academy: Global Health Elective Code of Conduct

- I will hold myself to the highest standards of professionalism, respect, and courtesy.
- I understand that the same standards of professionalism apply when I am abroad as when I am at home, including full disclosure about my status as a trainee, discussing patient care with a supervising preceptor, and obtaining consent in an ethically and culturally appropriate manner.
- I recognize that personal behaviors, clinical skills, and competencies are culturally based and resource-dependent. I will be sensitive to cultural differences in standards of care, and I will respect divergent but contextually appropriate diagnostic and treatment paradigms.
- If performing clinical care, I will care for patients under the direct supervision of a local preceptor, within the limitations established by my level of training. Where feasible, I will give all patients a choice of whether or not to have trainees involved in their care.
- If performing research, I will ensure that the same ethical and institutional safeguards that are in place at my home institution are upheld, including but not restricted to obtaining appropriate institutional review board approval and informed consent.
- I will keep the well-being of the patient foremost in my mind, recognizing the importance of honoring patient autonomy in communities with limited resources.
- I will respect every patient's decision-making capacity and right to privacy. This includes the context of photography and social media. I will seek permission from the patient and the host institution before taking, sharing, or posting any photograph or video material.
- I will prepare as completely as possible for my international elective, including learning about endemic diseases, local health care issues, laws, standards of care, and customs.
- I will be responsible for my personal health and well-being, including but not limited to predeparture preparation with a travel clinic, developing a management plan for existing health conditions, maintenance of personal safety during the elective, and evacuation planning.
- I will demonstrate cultural competency throughout my global health experience, through all facets of my personal and professional behavior.
- I will work with my mentors and local hosts to minimize the burden on the host institution.
- I will strive to overcome cultural and language barriers to delivery of care, by the use of trained interpreters, community liaisons, and local health care staff where possible.
- If I observe a breach of the above guidelines I will notify my faculty elective mentor.

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