

Best Practices for Short-Term Healthcare Missions

Integration with STM Standards categories

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30 November 2007

1. **God-Centeredness**—an excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom. It is centered on God's redemptive purposes and love for all nations and modeled after Christ's mission to the world. Those involved are people of godliness in actions, words, and thoughts who function out of doctrinally-sound, prayer-dependent methods which are wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate.

Strive for holistic approach (physical, spiritual, cognitive, emotional, social) ... shalom

- Do no harm as a practice of love toward one's neighbor.
- How to strengthen the local church? (by involving them in the medical project as coordinators, spiritual counselors, and drawing health care professionals from the local church in active service to community)
- Self-examine for ethnocentrism, pride and "savior complex"

2. **Empowering Partnerships**—an excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent relationships between sending and receiving partners sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God while serving Him. These relationships are characterized by a primary focus on the needs of the receiving partners, open communication, humility, mutual trust, and accountability resulting in plans which benefit all participants and the kingdom of God.

- Ministry partner (host) relationships are crucial. Hosts must be your guides on needs, culture, method...

Both expatriot missionaries and indigenous leaders. Broad cooperation needed with host church and all local health services.

- Strive for long-term partnerships and return trips

. . . If the first trip bore fruit . . . this allows relationship development / individuals and churches

- Recognize healthcare approaches are often culturally defined and address this – understanding local "alternative" health care practices (ie. herbs, etc), judiciously recommending their use (which may be more accessible in the long run).

3. **Mutual Design**—in an excellent short-term mission sending and receiving partners collaboratively plan each outreach to include specific service activities which both partners believe to be aligned with their long-term strategies. They seek to involve short-termers in ministry activities that do not

create unhealthy dependency and are within the capabilities of participants to accomplish. Those who go are screened, selected, and trained based on the mutual design so that they will place themselves in humble, servant, teachable positions in submission to the leadership of both partners.

- Engage in pre-field needs assessment (ie site-visit by leadership?); match team expertise to needs as possible
- Focus STMMs on the areas of greatest need: Unreached people-groups, disaster areas, and chronically impoverished areas.

4. **Comprehensive Administration**—an excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants in order to glorify God and be good stewards of time, talents, and funds. Honesty is foremost in all publicity, management of finances, and reporting of results. Appropriate risk management is implemented to remove unnecessary danger and keep risks within a mutually-determined acceptable level in light of our call to minister Christ's love courageously but wisely. Mutually designed projects are well-organized with proper support logistics while remaining receptive to the Holy Spirit's direction and changing circumstances.

- Obey all laws and submit to govt. on licenses, local health dept. contact... within reason and with host's help
- Ensure appropriate level of informed consent with patients (written?)
- Avoid procedures/treatment outside expertise except in serious emergency or trauma. Do not deviate from current practice
- Avoid expired (and experimental!) medications even though only a few are proven to break down after exp. date. Purchase meds locally when possible
- Do appropriate risk mgt. (insurance, inform your institution)

5. **Qualified Leadership**—an excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leaders for all participants who possess the character, skills, and values needed for the particular outreach. Leaders are well-prepared, exhibit spiritually mature servant leadership, possess appropriate skills, competency, accountability, and organizational skills. They also value empowering and equipping others and are committed to an interdependent, team approach to ministry.

Identifying spiritual, cultural and medical leaders, each with different roles

6. **Appropriate Training**—an excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants to be effective in the mutually designed outreach. Training is biblical, suitable for the planned service and culture, and timely. It is ongoing throughout all phases of the project (pre-field, on-field, post-field) and is performed by qualified trainers. Relevant training benefits all participants, fostering understanding, growth, and spiritual fruit while helping to prevent

offense, damage, and poor stewardship.

Health Care providers need certification and training in area of service (working within scope of practice)

■ Study endemic diseases in areas of service (eg. tropical or disaster medicine), learning from local health care workers whenever possible.

■ Study poverty, it's causes and consequences, as well as a wholistic understanding of health, being sensitive to the disparity in resources across cultures.

■ Train locals as needed, both professionals and community health workers, as well as team members.

7. **Thorough Follow-Up**—an excellent short-term mission assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants as these are crucial aspects of any short-term mission to help participants invest and multiply the STM experience. Debriefing begins with on-field re-entry preparation and includes post field follow-up to apply lessons learned and promote continued growth and commitment to Christ and His world. All participants including hosts are asked to evaluate the experience and those responses are reviewed and used to identify and amend unresolved issues (if any) and improve future STM efforts.

- Plan with host for patient follow-up and sustainability within the community (both medical and spiritual)