Preparing for your Overseas Dental Elective
DISCLAIMER:
The CDF cannot be held responsible for the information contained in this booklet. Students will have to confirm the information with the individual organisations and missionaries.
PREPARING FOR YOUR ELECTIVE OVERSEAS

This booklet has been prepared by the Christian Dental Fellowship to assist you in setting up your elective. The CDF cannot be held responsible for the information in this booklet. Information must be confirmed with the individual institutions and missionary societies including the conditions for undertaking electives and the health precautions.

HOW CAN THE CDF HELP?

The CDF cannot organise your elective for you but we will do our best to provide you with the information you need to set up an interesting and fulfilling elective in the Third World.

Some of our members are currently working in mission situations overseas and we also have links with other UK based mission organisations.

So, for questions about why, where and when you should go, or about the practicalities of travel, immunisations, visas and life in another culture, read on, this booklet will be a good start.

WHY AN ELECTIVE OVERSEAS?

At this stage, you probably don’t need convincing. However, there are many reasons for choosing an elective overseas:

- to gain dental experience different to that at home
- to experience life in another culture
- to get practical experience - you will often be allowed to get some ‘hands-on’ experience
- to get a global perspective on health care
- to ‘test’ the water for future Christian service overseas
- finally, and most importantly, to grow in your love and service for Christ.

WHEN SHOULD I GO?

There is usually an allotted time during your training, quite often in your final year. Timing may be critical for the country which you are planning to go to as far as climate is concerned.
HOW LONG SHOULD I GO FOR?
Unless you go for a reasonable length of time, the difficulties of adjusting to the new situation will outweigh the benefits. Use the time that you are allowed to the maximum.

WHEN SHOULD I START PLANNING?
As soon as possible!
Correspondence can be slow, although some contacts do have email. Any grants that you may want to apply for also take time to materialise. Visas, inoculations etc. all take plenty of time to organise too.

WHERE SHOULD I GO?
You may already have a specific country in mind. On the other hand, you may not know where to start. The following are worth bearing in mind:

a) what type of cultural experience would be most valuable? A country where English is spoken will make communication easier.
b) what kind of dental experience are you seeking? A clinic, a hospital or a mobile unit?
c) what type of organisation do you want to work with?
d) what is your budget like?

WHO DO I CONTACT AND HOW?
There are several possible answers to this question.

a) past student electives. There should be a file at your dental school with reports of past electives. It may be possible to contact this person for advice.
b) Christian mission societies.
c) CDF contacts
d) individual hospitals
HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?
This obviously depends very much on the location. The major expense involved is the airfare. A rough estimate can be obtained from a travel agent. As an approximate guide, the total cost of your elective is unlikely to be more than twice the cost of your airfare. You will have to budget for accommodation and food costs within your host country. Your hosts will give you a guide to the costs of this.

Possible extra costs include: visa charges, immunisations and any extra holiday period.

RAISING FINANCE.
You will be expected to raise the money yourself.

The Dean of your dental school may have details of grants, scholarships and bursaries for which you can apply.

If you are a member of the CDF, you will be eligible to apply for a travel grant. Forms are available from the Elective Secretary.

WILL I NEED IMMUNISATIONS?
Some developing countries have legal requirements for all visitors to have certain immunisations. For example, some parts of Africa and South America demand documentation to prove that you are covered for yellow fever.

Your GP will be able to give immunisations such as tetanus, polio, hepatitis A and B, typhoid and cholera. Try and plan your immunisations about 2-3 months before your departure as some may need 2-3 visits.

Centres, which give advice on, and may also give immunisations are:

Interhealth,
157, Waterloo Road,
London. SE1 8US.
Tel: 0171 902 9000
e mail: 100636.1271@Compuserve.com
WHAT ABOUT MALARIA?
Malaria, often chloroquine resistant, is on the increase in many parts of the world and you should take all possible precautions to avoid getting it. This means that you will need BOTH prophylactics AND avoidance measures to prevent yourself getting bitten.

Long sleeved shirts, long trousers, insect repellents etc. will all help here. Your GP will be able to advise you further.

WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS?
If you are travelling in the summer, you will need to make your reservations as early as possible due to heavy bookings on most airlines. The further ahead you book, the cheaper the tickets, but it may be more difficult to change the dates later.

The luggage allowance is usually 20 kilos and 1 item of hand luggage. Don’t take any more than you can manage to carry yourself and NEVER let anyone you don’t know help you with your luggage. It may well disappear!

Keep valuable items to a minimum and on your person. Carry as little cash as possible, and keep all travellers cheques and your passport in a money belt under your clothing. If you get into these habits early on, you’ll find that they become second nature.

It is advisable to take out a medical insurance policy covering accident and sickness. Most travel agents will offer you a reasonable deal including luggage and personal effects.
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO PREPARE?

Most importantly, take time to pray! You are entering a very new situation. Once you have finalised your plans, try to find out as much about the country and the mission as you can. If possible talk to someone who has been there before.

What are the major customs? Are there any special customs that you need to be aware of so that you don’t offend people? You may need to be very sensitive in the way that you dress or eat.

You are an ambassador not only for your country and dental school, but also for Jesus Christ, and your behaviour will strongly influence the attitude of your hosts to future elective applicants.

Make an effort to learn a little language - simple greetings etc.

Learn something about the country’s politics and history, but expect that people will have very different concerns from your friends at home. If you go with a humble and teachable attitude,

You will learn far more about the local culture. It may well mean that you learn a lot more about your own faith too!

The Lonely Planet Guide and The Rough Guide for your country will provide you with valuable information about your country. They can be purchased at most bookshops or borrowed from the library.

Take special precautions with your own health:

- Drink only water that has been boiled or is bottled with an intact seal.
- Eat only food that you have seen cooked or prepared yourself.
- Never swim in lakes or rivers unless you are sure that there is no schistosomiasis in the area - or crocodiles!
- Keep your feet covered.
- Find out about any risks in the area - snakes, leeches, spiders etc. and how to deal with them.
- Don’t be put off - the locals deal with these things all the time. They would find your local high street a total nightmare!
Contact List For Dental Electives - updated
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May need to speak Spanish

The Methodist Church Helena Goldie Hospital,
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Baptist Missionary Society. Jan Marston,
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