



30 Years of Pioneering Travel Health

July 2015

Welcome

Today's travel medicine and global health students will help shape the future of the specialty, so we're dedicating this edition of the Travax newsletter to them. To give you a glimpse of the kind of people coming through, we asked some current students and recent graduates about what had drawn them to this area of study. Oh, and the most challenging part, what was their top travel tip.

The Travax Team.

Meet the Travel Students

Dave Botten. Doctor, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

As a resident in family medicine, I attended a travel medicine and high altitude medicine conference in Lhasa, Tibet. I've been hooked ever since.

Our student health clinic did not have a formal operational travel clinic. Despite the large number of travellers within our clinic population, we had always referred on the more complicated travellers or those who required more specific care, and I knew that this was unnecessary. I already had basic travel health knowledge and the interest to see people for these consultations, but I knew that I would require a comprehensive foundation in the field to have the confidence to see travellers in the capacity of a travel medicine specialist. The Glasgow diploma course was the perfect answer, affording me the opportunity to keep working while learning and gaining the level of knowledge I needed.

Top travel tip: Zip-lock bags! They can contain liquids and prevent them from spilling, stop items from getting wet (e.g. phone), keep articles from mixing together or getting dirty, great for keeping some food fresh, etc. These are an absolute must on any type of trip (and take several - you'll find that you use every single one)!



Robyn Morrison, Medical Student, Paisley.

I have always been interested in travelling to new places and experiencing new cultures. I saw this Global Health special study course (SSC) as a good opportunity to further my interest in the topic.

I think as foreign travel becomes increasingly accessible to people from all walks of life it will become ever more crucial for medical professionals to be knowledgeable about travel medicine. Furthermore, having worked in and learned about medical facilities in the developing world, we realise how lucky we are to have such state of the art equipment so readily available to us.

Top travel tip: Take chocolate! The chocolate available in places such as Africa is nowhere near as good as what we're used to here. Scissors always come in handy too.



With some English language pupils in Western Uganda.



Jo at Uluru/Ayers Rock taken while circumnavigating Australia by motorcycle - 20,000km in 42 riding days!

Jo Turner, Practice Nurse, London.

I was first infected with the travel bug at the age of 18 when my father gave me a rucksack and told me to go and see the world. I was drawn to the RCPS(Glas) Diploma in Travel Medicine with a view to increasing my knowledge and specialising in this area.

Top travel tip: Research, Planning and Preparation.

Mhairi Roscoe, second year Medical Student from Edinburgh.

I love to travel and wanted to find out more about working as a doctor overseas!

The SSC has also shown me the practicalities of pursuing work overseas and I am now more aware of the health inequalities which exist not only in the UK, but additionally, throughout the world.

Top travel tip: Always carry a small amount of a different currency (eg American dollars) in case you run into difficulty exchanging money abroad. Also, put elastic bands around rolled up clothes as this will help to prevent your clothes unraveling during packing/unpacking your rucksack!



Mhairi and the volunteer group at Kusi in Peru.

Nicola McCreddin, second year Medical Student, originally from Dunblane.

I chose the SSC in Global Health and Travel Medicine as it has always been an area of genuine interest for me. The opportunity to write an essay on a topic of my choosing appealed to me, as I could strengthen my knowledge of a topic that interested me.

I felt slightly ignorant of the challenges faced by people in other countries, the SSC has inspired me to learn more about global health inequalities and the efforts made to improve them. I am now considering an intercalated degree in Global Health and would like to do work overseas once I have qualified.



Thailand - Doi Suthep Buddhist temple.

Samuel Glass, fourth year Medical Student, from a village about half an hour from Glasgow.

I first became interested in global health when I undertook a module run by the organisation Freedom from Torture. I enjoyed learning about human rights and the plight of asylum seekers and when I saw the opportunity to do the Global Health BSc it presented a great opportunity to widen my knowledge in the area.

I've travelled North America and much of Europe. My favourite country so far has been Hungary. I'd like to explore further afield in the future and hope to do my elective in India and do some travelling in Asia next summer.



Top travel tip: It's common sense but always remember to change your watch to local time as soon as you arrive in a new country! It's easy to get caught out.

Lucy Waite, final year medical student from Thornhill, near Callander.

I have always wanted to travel. Most of my summers have been spent working to save money and then spending it all on getting somewhere exciting.



Hand washing and infectious diseases class in Western rural Uganda.

I am very keen to work abroad in the future in a developing country. The SSC made me consider the ethical and practical aspects of foreign aid and volunteering which I hope will allow me to more sustainable and helpful when working abroad. Sustainability is something that I think is really hard to achieve as a medical volunteer abroad but the SSC certainly gave me the chance to consider how this may be achieved.

Top travel tip: Hiring a motorbike is often an amazing and cheap way to see an area*, particularly rural ones. Take some anti-histamines for getting a good nights sleep with mosquito bites. And always take string!

*The Travax Team take no responsibility for any injury or accident sustained as a result of following this top travel tip!!

Naomi Lungu, second year Medical Student, originally from Zambia.

I have had the privilege of growing up in two unique cultures and environments and this has allowed me to appreciate the importance of issues such as health inequalities and the work of public health initiatives in different contexts.

The course was very insightful and has definitely fuelled my interest in being able to travel and practice Medicine in many different settings across the globe.

Top travel tip: Travel light! There is nothing worse than spending your time when travelling dragging around heavy bags containing items that you just don't need. Make you sure that you can carry your entire luggage without any help.



Embracing the 'hands on' life in rural Africa.

Caitlin Jones, starting as an FY1 in Edinburgh.

I have always had an interest in travelling and learning about other cultures and became interested in Global Health after spending some time volunteering with asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow and began to learn about health inequalities.

I completed the BSc in Global Health in 2012-2013 after my third year of university and think that it has influenced a lot of my practice. It has made me far more aware of the inequalities that exist in the UK and it has widened my horizons to try to further understand why people don't have equal chances at good health.

Emily Cassels, fifth year Medical Student from Helensburgh.

Having done some travelling during university, particularly around East Africa, I was enthusiastic to gain a deeper understanding of the health and cultural challenges facing such countries and to expand on my somewhat superficial 'tourist' perspective. The SSC seemed like the perfect opportunity to do this whilst working on a project of my choice.

I have ambitions to work abroad, where I feel the knowledge gained during both the SSC and my following intercalated year studying Global Health, will be invaluable. Together, they have deepened my understanding of the global impact of the increase in travel and also armed me with the knowledge to help make even the smallest difference in the fight for global health equity.

Top travel tip: Keep an open mind and don't judge the lifestyle of others – embrace different possibilities, opportunities and people.



Emily and Caitlin at their global health degree awards ceremony.

Joanna Weir from Edinburgh.

I was interested in the SSC Global Health and Travel Medicine Course as in the future I would like to live and work abroad and so I thought it would be useful to learn about health globally.

I think what I learnt in this SSC will help me think about different health conditions people coming here from a foreign country may have as their common conditions are quite different from ours.

Top travel tip: Roll up your clothes when packing. This allows more room in your bag and also makes it easier to find what you want when you're in a rush.



At Kuang Si waterfalls near Luang Prabang, Laos.

Happy Birthday TRAVAX

Before TRAVAX launched in 1985, credible travel health resources were few, technology was in its infancy and unavailable to many, while professional support was lacking. Few people knew what travel medicine actually entailed. Although originally developed for practitioners in primary care settings in Scotland, TRAVAX is now world renowned – a major resource that's widely used and quoted as an authoritative voice by healthcare professionals at home and abroad.

With today's increasing traveller numbers and complex itineraries TRAVAX gives nurses invaluable support. Gone are the days of charts on the wall and doubts about destinations or epidemiology. TRAVAX uses all available technology, including maps, to support current information, allowing practitioners to offer the best advice to travellers. Congratulations and thank-you Team TRAVAX from the Royal College of Nursing.



Sandra Grieve
RCN Public Health Forum