February 24, 2014

To: School of Medicine Chairs and Directors, Vice and Associate Deans, and Residency Program Directors

From: Sam Hawgood, MBBS, Dean
    Catherine Lucey, MD, Vice Dean for Education

Re: School of Medicine learner rotations to Uganda and other countries with anti-LGBT laws

Thank you for all that you do to support our learners in their education as globally aware physicians.

The recent and highly publicized political events in Uganda have prompted us to critically evaluate the participation of UCSF students, residents, and fellows participating in international rotations in Uganda, and other countries with active political initiatives directed against homosexuality. President Museveni of Uganda signed a bill criminalizing homosexuality and the “promotion and recognition” of homosexuality. (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/24/uganda-president-signs-anti-gay-laws/print) While many countries have anti-homosexual legislation, the situation in Uganda is particularly severe and far-reaching. The legislation allows for life imprisonment for homosexuality and an initial sentence of 14 years in prison for the promotion and recognition of homosexuality. Per the linked article from The Guardian, the law “requires citizens to denounce to the police anyone suspected of being gay.”

International work has been a hallmark of UCSF physicians and scientists and we do not wish to jeopardize the good that has been and is being done by many in the UCSF community. However, we have a responsibility to safeguard the safety, health, and wellbeing of our learners. In striking a balance between providing opportunities to our learners to work with their treasured faculty and safeguarding the emotional, physical and legal wellbeing of our trainees, we are instituting the following School of Medicine policy for rotations in Uganda and similar countries. Effective Immediately:

1. Department Chairs, Residency Program Directors, and faculty advising learners on international rotations should familiarize themselves with the risks of international travel and work for LGBT learners and those who advocate on behalf of LGBT issues at all levels and should develop strategies to ensure that
faculty who advise trainees about travel overseas have the most up to date information about the risk to particular individuals, including anyone promoting or defending LGBT rights.

2. **Departments may not require rotations to countries with active anti-homosexual legislation.** All international rotations to countries with such legislation should be “OPT IN” only for all students, residents and fellows. No LGBT trainee should have to request to be excused from a required rotation to a country in which they face a greater danger than their peers because of their sexual orientation. “Opt-in” rather than “opt-out” status for rotations decreases the possibility that residents or students who are not “out” in the work place feel the need to disclose their sexual orientation to avoid a risky environment. In addition, any of our trainees can be perceived to be LGBT or be in support of homosexuality as defined by the laws of different countries. Lastly, straight members of our community should not be required to participate in a rotation in an environment that is counter to their values.

3. **Learners should not be required to explain why they have chosen against “opting in” to a specific rotation.**

4. **Departments should identify alternate international sites for rotations for any learner who does not “opt in” to a specific site and should ensure that there are neither financial nor educational penalties for selecting an alternate site.** There are many countries in Africa and around the world that are more tolerant of LGBT lifestyles and yet are still in need of support from US physicians and scientists.

5. **All learners who choose to “opt in” to a rotation in a country with active anti-homosexual legislation should participate in mandatory counseling,** provided by campus experts, about managing risk while in country. This counseling should be undertaken by all, regardless of orientation to avoid non-LGBT learners or LGBT learners who are not out from accidentally implicating peers or host colleagues in country, or from implicating themselves by expressing opinions that may be illegal. Travelers to these countries must have in place an extraction plan in the event that hostilities arise and must have appropriate contact information of on the ground resources.

6. **UCSF campus and the School of Medicine will take steps to develop a centralized counseling infrastructure to support departments and learners as they work to navigate this continuously evolving international environment and to provide the most current and accurate counseling about country specific risk and risk management for learners who are considering international rotations.**

7. **Any department with UCSF learners or faculty in Uganda should take steps this week to ensure that they have up to date information on who to contact in the event they feel threatened because of this or other legislative or police actions.** The time to extract an individual from country is before they are arrested or detained, not afterwards. IJET continues to provide extraction resources.
This is a preliminary policy, designed to actively manage an evolving situation. Our colleagues in Global Health are working locally, nationally and internationally on advocacy strategies to reverse this and other similar governmental actions. Should the circumstances within Uganda or similar governments change, the policy will be adapted and you will be notified. We will share this policy with our colleagues in the other UCSF Schools and other UC Campuses. A committee chaired by Beth Wilson, MD, MPH has been actively considering these issues and will present a full report later this spring.
FAQs

Many countries have anti-homosexual legislation. Why are you taking this step now?

We are taking this step because this appears to be an escalation in anti-homosexual sentiment in Uganda and because the breadth of the law (against the promotion and recognition of homosexuality and requiring citizens to denounce others to the police) facilitates prosecution with little more than accusations.

Which countries are concerning in this regard?

Our greatest concerns are for countries such as Uganda, Nigeria, and Russia in which the central government is actively supporting anti-homosexual legislation in contrast to those countries that turn a blind eye toward community based discrimination and harassment. While both are unacceptable, the former may pose a greater risk for Western visitors and their in-country hosts. We are seeking further expertise on the continuously evolving situation in other countries. One list of countries with the most severe anti-homosexual laws can be found here under “Dangerous Destinations”. The University’s IJet Global Intelligence report is accessed here:


If we don’t allow rotations to Uganda, we shouldn’t allow rotations to other countries that have anti-homosexual legislation.

We are not forbidding rotations to Uganda; instead we are preventing REQUIRED rotations to Uganda and providing the means for informed decision making by those who elect to train there.

All global health rotations are dangerous and yet we send learners there all of the time.

All travelers to developing countries accept a level of risk related to social, political and health issues. Those risks are shared equally by all, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are addressing this issue because the laws of these countries add a layer of risk to individuals because of their personal identity. It is not shared by all and therefore should be treated differently than universal risks.

All Travelers from UCSF have iJET coverage in the event of a problem.

Our risk management experts have met with our IJET account executives and are actively monitoring the situation. OF NOTE, there is no insurance or emergency coverage that provides assistance to anyone detained or arrested by local authorities. Anyone who anticipates that they may be in danger, however, should call the ijet global emergency hotline immediately and they may be able to be "extracted" before facing police or mob action. Registration of travel through the UC travel portal remains the
single best way to ensure that students, staff, and faculty get the full benefit of the Travel Accident/Emergency Medical coverage as well as the iJet global alert and emergency services.

If we prevent rotations to countries with whom we disagree, we will have no place to send trainees.

We are preventing required rotations, not all rotations. We recognize that there are many developing countries in need of US medical and research support that learners could visit instead of those that are actively legislating against LGBT learners and their supporters.

We have an LGBT Graduate student who needs to be in this country to complete work on his/her dissertation. Changing their site now will devastate their progress.

This is a unique situation in which the LGBT learner may have already opted in to work in this country, recognizing the risk. The benefit of an international experience that is essential for the granting of a degree may justify the risk. We recommend that a trusted faculty member ensure that the individual understands their options and takes the necessary steps to protect themselves. This type of activity is not prohibited.

We don’t have time or resources to start another site.

In that case, we recommend that all rotations to outside institutions be considered to be elective and that competencies related to international rotations also be considered elective until such time as you are able to have alternate options from which residents and students to choose from.

LGBT residents and students can just not disclose their sexual orientation in country.

Governments who are actively promoting anti-homosexual legislation have been known to use social media and the internet to screen visa applicants for evidence of a “homosexual lifestyle.” To manage this for required rotations, LGBT residents and students have been advised to assume a different identity while they are in country to avoid identification as LGBT. In addition, avoiding identification may require altering one’s social media and CV. Even if this is successful, it places an extreme burden on a trainee to deny who they are in order to participate in an educational activity. The trainee is in the best position to decide whether the educational benefits of a rotation in this environment is worth their personal burden.

Millions of US dollars and substantial amounts of time are spent by US faculty in very important projects in Uganda.

Faculty are in a unique position to be able to choose how they spend their time, what projects they work on and where they conduct their work. Learners should be similarly free to opt in to an experience rather than be required to participate in one that they consider to be too high a personal risk.
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