1. What is required to set up a clinical rotation at an international site?
There are five steps to set up an international elective rotation. First, interested residents and clinical fellows should check with their program director before making any plans or decisions. Not all specialties and/or programs allow an elective rotation while some programs at UCSF already have recommended or required international sites. Second, trainees should research what is available by reviewing websites and/or talking to colleagues who have gone abroad. http://medschool2.ucsf.edu/gme/Prog_Resources/taa.html. Third, a successful and educational international elective requires an engaged supervisor in the international setting who will be responsible for the appropriate amount of supervision, and who is able to address health and safety concerns both during the planning phase and in case of emergency while abroad. Fourth, the resident or clinical fellow formalizes the agreement with the institution abroad by working with his/her program coordinator to complete the Teaching Affiliation Agreement (TAA) request form, Program Letter of Agreement (PLA), and goals and objectives for the rotation. Fifth, after final approval is obtained from the program director or his/her designee, the required paperwork is submitted for review to the Office of Graduate Medical Education (OGME). Ideally, if you are hoping to complete a clinical rotation, you should begin this process one year in advance of your desired travel date.

2. Does there have to be a UCSF faculty attending at the site?
This varies by individual training program and program director requirements. At the very least, the supervisor at the international institution has to be at the appropriate level to provide the necessary supervision and evaluation of the resident or clinical fellow. Each international supervisor must be approved by the traveling trainee’s program director.

UCSF Global Health Sciences and several GME programs already have strong relationships with a number of sites that provide great experiences. Residents and clinical fellows are encouraged to research these opportunities and consider them before looking into a site where no established relationship exists. Traveling to a site for which agreements with UCSF are already in place will expedite arranging the rotation and decrease the length of time needed to create a new training relationship. A list of both domestic and international sites with established agreements with UCSF may be found on the GME website. http://medschool2.ucsf.edu/gme/Prog_Resources/taa.html

3. Why does it take so long to get approval for a new foreign rotation as training elective?
There are two reasons. Finding the right institution and faculty supervisor can and should take some time. It is common that once the appropriate site is selected, a program and the resident or clinical fellow will go back and forth for a while to identify the best supervising physician and to determine that person’s exact responsibilities. Secondly, the training affiliation agreement between institutions may take as long as six months to negotiate and execute. Again, when trainees decide to go to an established site these issues are significantly mitigated.

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UC Office of the President requires TAAs (Teaching Affiliation Agreements) for all sites to which students, residents, and clinical fellows rotate. These agreements protect the trainee, the other institution, and the University. UCSF has an interest in making sure these relationships are mutually beneficial and working out the details involved in some of these arrangements may take time. For example, a TAA spells out which institution is responsible for testing and treatment if a trainee is exposed to a pathogen or sustains a needle stick injury while on the rotation.

In addition, there is a burden associated with hosting a visitor. UCSF wants to be sure that the benefit to the trainee is appropriate in relation to the real costs of having a visitor who is unfamiliar with the environment and its demands. To be a valuable educational experience, the relationship needs to be beneficial for both parties. In 2012, John A. Crump, et al introduced the WEIGHT guidelines for the ethics and best practices for training experiences in global health. Residents, clinical fellows, and program directors are encouraged to read this article when making decisions regarding international rotations. http://medschool2.ucsf.edu/gme_committee/TAAPage/WEIGHTGrouponInternationalRotations.pdf

Occasionally, the process may take additional time if the resident or clinical fellow is doing scholarly work for which CHR approval in the United States and/or the equivalent in the other country is required.

4. Do my UCSF salary, benefits, and malpractice coverage continue while I am on an elective in a foreign country?

For an officially approved rotation, yes. Officially approved means the rotation has been approved by the trainee’s program director and all paperwork processed according to GME and UCSF policy. Keep in mind that malpractice coverage only covers those activities within the course and scope of a training program. This means that a resident or clinical fellow may only function at his/her level in his/her training program, regardless of conditions at an international site. Work under supervision may be done at the same clinical level as at UCSF, but not beyond.

Regular health insurance coverage does continue. In addition, anyone on an officially approved rotation qualifies for registration for UC’s international Business Travel Insurance https://www.rmis.ucsf.edu/RMISDetails.aspx?Panel=9 which includes evacuation, emergency, and repatriation. Each trainee should call his/her health insurance carrier ahead of time to determine specifically what should be done in the case of emergency or if health care is needed. http://ucsfhr.ucsf.edu/index.php/residents/ If you are on prescription medication, be certain to take an adequate supply with you.

5. Do I need a medical license for the country in which I will be doing the elective?

It depends on the country. It is the trainee’s responsibility to make sure that he/she meets the requirements as appropriate so this question should be asked and researched early in the process. For example, one country to which UCSF residents and clinical fellows rotate frequently is Uganda, and Uganda does require an in-country license and it can take a few months to obtain this. In addition to licenses, other special visas or type of registration may be required.

6. What is the funding for an international rotation? Are there grants for this?

Beyond salary, which should be addressed with your program director in your initial conversation regarding the option of rotating internationally, there is no funding available at UCSF for additional expenses, in most circumstances. However, there may be extramural funding opportunities, but trainees would need to apply for these on their own. These grants may be available through foundations, private support, and philanthropic organizations. Global Health Sciences is hopeful that our ability to provide some degree of assistance with travel and project expenses will increase over time.

7. How do I find rotations at a site in another country?

The GME website has a list of institutions that already have established relationships with UCSF. http://medschool2.ucsf.edu/gme/Prog_Resources/taa.html There are an increasing number of other UCSF websites to begin the search including, the Global Health Sciences website http://globalhealthsciences.ucsf.edu/, the global health section of the CTSI website http://ctsi.ucsf.edu/about-us/programs/global-health, and the Pathways to Discovery