

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN CLINICAL GLOBAL HEALTH

CUGH, March 17, 2018

VAST INCREASE IN SHORT-TERM GLOBAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES

- ▶ The tsunami of volunteers. every year:
 - ▶ thousands of organizations
 - ▶ tens of thousands of volunteers
 - ▶ billions of dollars



SPONSORS OF SHORT TERM MEDICAL MISSIONS

- Faith-based organizations
- NGO's (non-faith-based).
- Private corporations.
- Brokers and tourist agencies.
- Educational institutions.
 - High school
 - Undergraduate
 - Graduate health professions—our focus, though common issues with all sponsors, students, volunteers.

WHAT DO MANY U.S. STUDENTS BRING TO INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES?

- ▶ Enthusiasm, desire to help, desire for good experiences and resume-building.
- ▶ But also commonly held stereotypes:
 - People in low income countries are mostly poor, sick, and uneducated, with little ability to solve their problems.
 - Africa is a country and it's all poor and everyone lives in mud huts.
 - "They" have problems, "we" have solutions.
 - "They" have culture and superstitions, "we" have science and technology.
 - "We" just need to educate "them" to solve their problems (if only "they" weren't so corrupt and/or uneducated).

ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPES REINFORCED BY COLONIAL AND RACIAL PREJUDICES

Often unrecognized but still powerful.

Foreigners in scrubs assumed to be physicians.

Poor countries assumed to be without resources.

Noelle Sullivan (2018) International clinical volunteering in Tanzania: A postcolonial analysis of a Global Health business, *Global Public Health*, 13:3, 310-324, DOI: [10.1080/17441692.2017.1346695](https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2017.1346695)

GROWING CRITIQUE OF “WHITE SAVIOR INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX”



Instagram—Barbie savior

Blogs, Facebook sites
(e.g. Critical
Volunteering Reviews)

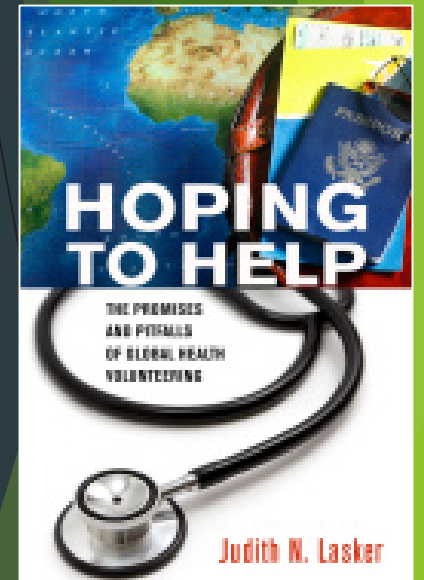
Scholarly literature

Personal accounts

RESULTS OF RESEARCH: DOMINANT PRACTICES DO NOT MATCH HOST PREFERENCES

Hosts appreciate volunteers but want longer stays, more skills and better preparation, and programs that respect hosts and are matched to their needs, including for capacity-building.

Most short-term “medical missions” are two weeks or less, with little volunteer preparation, no needs assessment, no evaluation, no capacity building, and an unequal or no partnership in host country.



*M D Rozier, JN. Lasker & B. Compton (2017) Short-term volunteer health trips: aligning host community preferences and organizer practices, *Global Health Action*, 10:1

RESULTS OF RESEARCH: MANY GUIDELINES EXIST FOR BEST PRACTICES

- ▶ Analysis of 27 published guidelines for short-term overseas health trips show considerable consensus.
- ▶ No enforcement mechanisms.
- ▶ None represent host country organizations and leaders.
- ▶ Many host countries have regulations governing visiting medical teams; often ignored.

Judith N. Lasker , Myron Aldrink, Ramaswami Balasubramaniam, Paul Caldron, Bruce Compton, Jessica Evert, Lawrence C. Loh, Shailendra Prasad and Shira Siegel. Guidelines for responsible short-term global health activities: developing common principles. *Globalization and Health*, 2018, 14:18.

SIX PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL PROGRAMS, BASED ON 27 EXISTING GUIDELINES AND STUDIES OF HOST VIEWS

1. A host partner that defines the program, including the needs to be addressed and the role of the host community in directing and teaching the volunteers
2. Sustainability of program impact through capacity building and continuity of care
3. Respect for governance and legal and ethical standards
4. Mutuality of learning between hosts and guests; respect for local health professionals
5. Appropriate recruitment, preparation and supervision of volunteers, including training in language, health problems and their social determinants, and in cultural humility.
6. Regular evaluation of program outcomes

CoRSTEGH: COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE SHORT-TERM EXPERIENCES IN GLOBAL HEALTH

- ▶ Our Purpose: To ensure that short-term global health activities are conducted ethically and make beneficial contributions to health and wellbeing in communities around the world.

CoRSTEGH STRATEGIC VISION

In collaboration with others, working to improve practices with all relevant stakeholders to...

- ▶ Continually prioritize host country leadership and input
- ▶ Establish common quality principles for all stakeholders
- ▶ Conduct research to support the quality principles
- ▶ Develop incentives to encourage compliance with principles
- ▶ Develop surveillance, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- ▶ Develop a registry of responsible programs
- ▶ Develop programs for education and awareness that change existing norms and beliefs that enable poor practices
- ▶ Advocate for policy change