



Establishing a Mission Rotation

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Planning a Pharmacy Missions Elective as an Advanced Practice Experience

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Many students and faculty members from around the country have posed the question: "Is it possible to participate in a medical missions trip as part of the fourth year rotation experience?" With an increased interest in participating in such projects, we thought it would be useful to provide readers with some of our findings from conducting medical missions elective rotations. The possibility of setting up missions rotations depends upon the individual school's policies and regulations, as well as any state licensing restrictions that may apply. Starting the preparations early and talking with the school's experiential director are key components for this process.

For both students and preceptors, initial steps to be taken include:

1. Locate a mission destination, hospital and/or clinic that can serve as a location for the mission trip.
2. Identify students who are willing to participate in this type of rotation.
3. Identify a preceptor who is willing to oversee students on the rotation.
4. Ensure that both the school and its experiential director are supportive of this type of elective rotation.

1. Locate a mission destination or hospital/clinic

One of the best options is to locate a short-term medical mission trip during the timeframe of interest. There are numerous organizations and groups that conduct such trips each year. Groups such as Global Health Outreach, which works in partnership with CPFI, conduct 20-30 trips a year around the world (www.cmdahome.org) and have frequently taken students from various health professions on their trips. Mission Finder (www.missionfinder.org), a portal website for mission information, might also be a great resource in locating a site. In addition to pre-arranged short-term trips, mission hospitals and clinics often allow short-term medical visitors to come and serve at their facility. Associated mission organizations or local missionaries from area churches should be contacted to identify these opportunities. Additionally, attending the Global Missions Health Conference (www.medicalmissions.com) is another way to network and help identify missionaries or organizations participating in short-term trips.



2. Identify interested students

The next step is to identify students who are interested in the rotation, and to promote it among others so as to increase student interest. Advertising to the students via e-mails, fliers, and class announcements have proved to be a successful means of generating interest. Additionally, fundraising as a school or as a mission team, as well as regular team meetings will help with some of the expenses, build teamwork skills and help alleviate many of the concerns the students may have in considering a rotation such as this. Additionally, a faculty member may be willing to help secure grant funding for these types of trips.

3. Identify Preceptors

In order for a rotation to be established, it is imperative that a preceptor be identified. One option is to ask faculty members (practice or science faculty, or an administrator who may not usually precept) in the students' school to be a preceptor. If it is not possible to find a faculty member from the school, other options are to recruit a pharmacist from the local community or church, or to determine if a pharmacist has already applied to serve on the same mission trip or site and see if he/she would be willing to serve in that capacity.

Additionally, some schools may allow other licensed health care practitioners such as physicians and dentists to precept. Consult individual school policies and procedures regarding this matter. If none of these options are successful, some schools' experiential directors may allow any of the above candidate preceptors to precept remotely. In this last option, the preceptor is not required to go on the mission trip with the student, but is allowed to oversee and assign tasks and projects from afar.

4. Gaining the support of the school and the Experiential Director

It is best to start working with the school and the experiential director as soon as possible. Their support for a rotation such as this should be confirmed and reaffirmed. State and other related rules and regulations should also be consulted to ensure that all requirements are met and all rules are followed with respect to eligibility of preceptors and rotation sites. Rotation Schedule: An example rotation plan designed for a four-week rotation is listed below. Please note that the duration of the mission trip is not required to be the entire four weeks. From our experiences, the trips have ranged in duration from seven days up to three weeks.



Example Rotation Plan:

Week 1: Planning, preparing and researching the area of travel for the trip

Weeks 2 and 3: Mission trip

Week 4: Debriefing and finishing assigned projects

Projects that are typically assigned to students include a host of writing and speaking assignments in addition to the trip. Before leaving for the trip, during the first week of the rotation, students are asked to design and prepare a Pharmacy Evangelism Tool (PET) to be used in the pharmacy setting that will further the Christian witness. Students have used

wordless bracelets, Bible verses attached to pharmacy dispensing bags, Christian poems, hand-made crafts with verses inscribed on them, and evangelism pins, among others.

Additionally, before leaving for the trip, they are asked to prepare a short paper or a presentation on the area or people group for which they will be working, and if applicable, to design a team building activity for the mission team to use prior to departure.

While on the trip, students are asked to complete a few other projects - keeping a journal, recording a patient case with both physical and spiritual assessments, implementation of their PET, and leading a devotional for the team. Upon their return, the rotation students will spend time writing about the use of the PET and the patient case, and will submit their journal. Additionally, students write an article for the CPFI Journal, and prepare a formal PowerPoint presentation to be given at the school upon their return. All of these projects and numerous one-on-one discussions help the students to process their experience and examine how they will continue to serve in missions long after they have graduated from pharmacy school.

Although each trip and rotation is unique, this has been the basic format that has been implemented successfully for several rotations. We hope that this information is useful to those looking to set up an elective mission rotation. We would be happy to answer any questions others might have and help customize a rotation that is appropriate for your needs.