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Brief report

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# A Model for Sustainable Short-Term International Medical Trips

Parminder Suchdev MD, MPH <sup>1</sup> ... Elinor Graham MD, MPH <sup>1</sup>

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The health status of many people in developing countries is often dismal compared with the norms in industrialized countries. Increasingly, medical practitioners in the United States and other industrialized countries have become interested in global health issues, an interest that often takes the form of short-term international medical trips. We discuss several ethical issues associated with participation in such trips and use our experiences in developing the Children's Health International Medical Project of Seattle (CHIMPS) to outline and illustrate a set of 7 guiding principles for making these trips. CHIMPS is a resident-run, faculty-supported international medical program founded in 2002 by pediatric residents at the University of Washington in Seattle. Members of CHIMPS work with a rural community in El Salvador to support ongoing public health interventions there and provide sustainable medical care in collaboration with the community and a local nongovernmental organization. The 7 principles developed as a result of this work—mission, collaboration, education, service,

teamwork, sustainability, and evaluation” can be used as a model for health practitioners as they develop or select international medical trips. The importance of partnering with the community and working within the existing medical and public health infrastructure is emphasized. Many of the challenges of doing international medical work can be overcome when efforts are guided by a few specific principles, such as those we have outlined.



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## Key Words

medical education; pediatrics; professional ethics; world health

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