

Practical Aspects of the Kenya Medical Exchange Program

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The Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital (MTRH) is located in Eldoret, in the western highlands of Kenya in East Africa. Eldoret is the fifth largest city in Kenya with a population of approximately 200,000. The climate is tropical with an elevation of 7,000 feet.

The hospital campus is a 15-minute walk from the gated residential compound, IU House. Residents, attendings and family members reside at IU House during their stay. Medical students are housed in the medical school dormitory with the Kenyan medical students across the street from the hospital. Both living situations are communal.

The medical center is a large multi-building compound with open walkways and lush gardens. The interior of the hospital has large, open, gender-segregated wards along with subspecialty units and outpatient clinics. The children's and mother and baby hospitals are contained within their own buildings on campus.

The central outpatient clinic – AMPATH – is part of the MTRH campus. There is also a network of smaller, rural health centers throughout the entire western Kenya/Rift Valley area.

The medical exchange is bilateral. Four Kenyan medical students come to Brown for six weeks each year. Two



Eldoret, Kenya

Kenyan registrars (housestaff) come to Brown every other year for four- to six-month rotations.

Brown participants include attendings, fellows, residents, medical students and researchers. All Brown rotators must be endorsed by three senior faculty members as well as attending a mandatory orientation lecture.

As an AMPATH consortium member, Brown has two dedicated months each year to schedule students and residents. Rotation opportunities often become available outside of the scheduled months for residents. Attendings, fellows and researchers rotate throughout the year. All rotations are scheduled and organized through the Kenya Program office at The Miriam Hospital.

Brown residents and students are placed on ward teams at MTRH and follow the



Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital

daily schedule of their respective teams. This is a very demanding clinical environment with a myriad of serious medical illnesses as well as a significant overlay of infectious diseases. The mortality on the inpatient wards averages 10% per day. The system operates as a 'pay-as-you-go' model, with each procedure and treatment negotiated with the patient and family members. The members of the ward team responsible for providing care also have the responsibility of ensuring that the proposed care plan is affordable.

It is important to evaluate the degree of difficulty of this rotation on a personal level in making the decision to undertake this very real challenge. The workload is quite heavy and clinically challenging. The emotional toll should not be understated. The high mortality rate and relatively young patient population makes for a very significant adjustment. There are medical risks to the rotators involved. Approximately 60% of the inpatient population is HIV-infected. A recent study documented a 4% tuberculin skin test conversion rate among rotators and their family members. The physical risks include a substantial rate of vehicle collisions

– great care must be taken when planning travel. The trip to Eldoret from the United States takes the better part of two days. The overall cost of the rotation is approximately \$3,500, excluding personal travel.

Travel within the country is encouraged. Kenya is a very beautiful country with an abundance of varied flora and fauna, including mountainous terrain, savannah and rain forest. Most rotators incorporate some travel into their itineraries. ❖

Author

Janet O'Connell, MPH, is the Brown Kenya Program Administrator.

Guest Editors' Acknowledgement

Janet O'Connell, MPH, has a diverse public health background in maternal and child health, infectious disease, and international health education. She is the person most responsible for oversight of all Program activities. She is a friendly, caring, and helpful presence in the office. Everyone associated with the Program, both at Brown and at Moi, greatly appreciate her efforts.