

Selection of trainees for global health experiences: a literature review

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Abstract

Background: As medical trainee participation in global health experiences (GHE) increases, ethical and logistical challenges must be addressed to ensure that GHEs are beneficial both to trainees and hosting institutions. Selection of suitable trainees for GHEs is an important aspect of a mutually beneficial global health partnership. To our knowledge, a literature review on best practices for selection of trainees for GHEs does not yet exist.

Objectives: To systematically review literature regarding current practices in selection of trainees for GHEs, and to investigate whether existing programs involve host institutions in the selection of trainees.

Methods: The authors performed a systematic review of literature indexed on PubMed, CABI, and EMBASE in July of 2020. Abstracts were limited to studies in English related to selection guidelines for trainees in global health experiences published in the last 5 years.

Results: A total of nine articles met inclusion criteria. Two major themes emerged: criteria for trainee selection and selection methods. Selection criteria included self-selection, ability to pay, academic standing, clinical qualifications, and non-academic attributes. Selection methods included written application, letter of recommendation, personal interview, and multiple mini interview.

Discussion: Standardized guidelines for the selection of trainees for GHEs do not yet exist. When selecting trainees for a GHE, in addition to academic standing and clinical skills, it is important to select for favorable attitudes and behaviors known as non-academic attributes. While several sources emphasized the importance of building a lasting partnership between host and sending institution, only one source described the methods by which the host institution was involved in selection of trainees. These findings are important because they identify a gap in practice and an opportunity to develop and evaluate a system for trainee selection for GHEs.