
Medicine in Madagascar: Proposal for a Medical Student Elective Attachment



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Aim

To incorporate the contribution of elective medical students to help further develop the Blue Ventures contraception and sexual health service in Southern Madagascar.

Objectives

- 1 To offer a period of attachment at the Blue Ventures expedition site in Andavadoaka which provides an experience that is enjoyable, challenging, makes a valuable contribution to local communities and meets the learning needs of elective medical students.
- 2 To enable medical students to contribute to the development of the Blue Ventures contraception and sexual health service, through the development of satellite clinics in the region surrounding Andavadoaka.

Background

Blue Ventures is a UK based marine conservation charity working in the village of Andavadoaka, situated in a remote part of the coast of south west Madagascar. Through the development of a strategy that promotes sustainable use of the coastal resources, Blue Ventures aims to achieve its dual objectives of enabling the sustainable development of the coastal communities, and ensuring the protection of the surrounding delicate coastal ecosystems. An integral part of this work is the newly developed family planning service for the communities in and around Andavadoaka. (See “Report on Family Planning Project” and www.blueventures.org for more information).

The service is currently manned by the Blue Ventures (BV) Medical Officer and local BV staff, and operates a clinic in Andavadoaka, population 1,200. BV currently needs additional skilled technical support in order to expand the clinic to reach a wider community, as well as to assess the feasibility of offering an outreach service, deliver a programme of education and awareness raising initiatives, and facilitate the delivery of outreach contraception and sexual health clinics.

Incorporating the contribution of elective medical students will enable BV to meet these objectives

with huge potential for mutual benefit. Working alongside the BV medical officer in Andavadoaka will offer medical students an experience that offers a number of learning opportunities (see *Appendix 1*) and an opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the health care of one of the poorest resource-dependent communities in the world. In addition, it would provide an exciting opportunity to contribute to the work of an award-winning marine conservation and sustainable development charity, whilst experiencing life in one of the most beautiful and biologically unique countries in the world.

This project will appeal either to individual students or small groups of two or three. The proposal has been split into two phases, and it is anticipated that these phases will be undertaken by two different, successive students or groups of students. Phase Two, which is concerned with delivery of the service, need not be limited to one student or one group. Since long-term continuation of the project is required, successive students or groups of students may wish to be involved with the delivery of the service and effectively repeat what is outlined in Phase Two. Alternatively, as the project evolves new opportunities for medical student involvement may emerge.

Proposed Plan: Phase One

- 1 Travel to Andavadoaka. Stay in Andavadoaka for a one week period of induction and training. Observe/assist Medical Officer in medical duties, including running the family planning clinic. Opportunity for private study, work on personal project or participation in expedition activities.
- 2 Identify appropriate needs assessment tools to be used in satellite sites.
- 3 Make arrangements for travelling to the north of Andavadoaka, including securing of transportation by traditional fishing pirogue (canoe) and an interpreter.
- 4 Travel to coastal villages north of Andavadoaka and in each of the identified villages meet with village elders, conducting a needs assessment and meetings with the community (via interpreter) to raise awareness about contraception and sexual health issues.
- 5 Establish the availability of local resources that might assist in the delivery of the service, such as villagers with basic medical training, village buildings suitable for running a clinic and for accommodating BV staff.
- 6 Travel back to Andavadoaka and produce report for Medical Officer and Expedition Manager, to include recommendations on the most appropriate site/sites for a satellite clinic to the north of Andavadoaka.
- 7 Further period of work with Medical Officer, to include assistance in data gathering on clinic outputs and impacts. Further opportunity for private study, work on personal project or participation in expedition activities.
- 8 Travel to villages to south of Andavadoaka, to conduct work as outlined in 3,4 and 5 above.
- 9 Spend remaining time working with Medical Officer, working on personal project or taking part in expedition activities.
- 10 Prepare and deliver presentation to expedition team on findings. Prepare report for Blue Ventures Head Office and medical school.

Phase Two

- 1 Travel to Andavadoaka. Stay in Andavadoaka for a one week period of induction and training. Observe/assist Medical Officer in medical duties, including running the family planning clinic. Opportunity for private study, work on personal project or participation in expedition activities.
- 2 Make arrangements for travelling to and running clinic from appointed site for northern satellite clinic.
- 3 Travel to appointed site in the north with medical officer, interpreter, medical supplies and training aids.
- 4 Under supervision of Medical Officer, recruit and train community member to assist with clinic, help deliver programme of education and awareness raising events, and act as point of contact for all clinic related matters in BV team member's/medical students' absence.
- 5 Under supervision of Medical Officer, set up and run contraception and sexual health clinic.
- 6 Make arrangements for next clinic date, prior to return to Andavadoaka.
- 7 Travel back to Andavadoaka. Report back to BV team.
- 8 Further period of work with Medical Officer, to include assistance in data gathering on clinic outputs and impacts. Further opportunity for private study, work on personal project or participation in expedition activities.
- 9 Travel to appointed site in the south of Andavadoaka, to conduct work as outlined in 10-14, above.
- 10 Spend remaining time working with Medical Officer, working on personal project or taking part in expedition activities. Prepare and deliver presentation to expedition team on what was achieved. Prepare report for Blue Ventures Head Office and medical school.

Financial Arrangements

Blue Ventures will incur a cost for hosting medical students at their expedition site in Andavadoaka. Although these costs are small, comprising costs for food and accommodation, these costs will be passed on to the students. Any additional activity that is undertaken whilst on site, such as diving or whale watching, will also be charged for at cost price. As this project incorporates a significant service commitment for the students, the usual expedition fees will not be charged. If medical students would prefer to take a more active part in the expedition itself, and be less involved in the family planning work, this can be discussed and negotiated prior to departure.

It would also be expected that the students would cover their own travel costs (although BV will be happy to assist with travel arrangements), the costs of additional interpreters, costs of pirogue hire/boat purchase, and a contribution towards running of the clinic. Costs in Madagascar are very low compared with the UK; travel is likely to make up the bulk of the overall costs, and the overall costs are likely to be well within the budget of a medical elective attachment. Given the innovative and important nature of the work, it is anticipated that students will raise sufficient sponsorship to cover their costs.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.blueventures.org/researchers.htm>

Appendix 1: Anticipated Learning Outcomes

Dr Mohan, Medical Advisor to Blue Ventures and the founder of the family planning project, is also Associate Dean for Postgraduate GP Education for the South West Peninsula Deanery, and Honorary Fellow of the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry. Given his

interest in medical education he is keen to ensure this proposal offers good opportunities for meeting curriculum learning objectives, as well as offering rich opportunities for other important, extra curricular learning.

At the end of the period of elective attachment, students will:

- 1 Know and be able to manage the common conditions encountered on a tropical marine expedition.
- 2 Understand the challenges of practicing medicine in a remote setting.
- 3 Understand the importance of practicing preventative medicine in a remote setting.
- 4 Understand the importance of adequate supporting infrastructure in the delivery of effective healthcare.
- 5 Be able to recognise and provide immediate care for the common and important diving injuries.
- 6 Be able to conduct a risk assessment.
- 7 Understand the importance of health and safety in expedition planning and delivery.
- 8 Understand the cultural, social, ecological and economic context of family planning and population management in south west Madagascar.
- 9 Understand the relationships between resource use, sustainability, health care, family planning and population management.
- 10 Understand the logistical and ethical challenges of population management.
- 11 Understand the cultural and social challenges of providing family planning services.
- 12 Have demonstrated competence in counselling women and couples on contraception and protection against sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- 13 Have demonstrated competence at offering a range of contraceptive services to women and couples (Depo-Provera, combined oral contraceptive, progestagen only pill and condoms).
- 14 Know the prevalence of STIs in the region.
- 15 Be able to provide advice to patients about STIs.
- 16 Have demonstrated competence in conducting a needs assessment.
- 17 Be able to make decisions about service design and delivery based on logistical and social considerations.
- 18 Be able to assist in the development and delivery of a contraception and sexual health clinic.
- 19 Understand the importance of monitoring and evaluation of any medical service.
- 20 Know the range of monitoring methodologies used for the project.
- 21 Have demonstrated competence in reflective writing, by writing a report on their experience, to include reflections on what they have learnt, a personal evaluation of the project and its effectiveness, and recommendations for improvements/further service development.

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