

FAQs

QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU APPLY

1) Why should I go abroad and study Global Health?

For more information about the importance of international health in your professional development, we invite to read our "Why Global Health?" document [here](#).

2) What is the First Step?

Read the website information and decide in which program you are most interested. Using the search option, find a program that fits your goals, your academic skills, and language requirements. Read all the program information in detail. Look at the past participants experiences on the program on that web page. Reading the past participants experiences will give you a very good idea of what to expect while you are on the program. When you are ready to apply to a program click on "Apply Now" located on any Program Description page or the Home Page. Follow the application procedure detailed on the website.

3) Who should my references be? What is required?

Choose two professional references that know you and your work style well. They may be professors, supervisors at work or a volunteer position, coaches, etc. Your references will be emailed directly once you submit your application. PLEASE let them know that you are applying to our program and that they will hear from us VIA EMAIL. This is a very simple format of fielding recommendations, there is no requirement for references to write and mail letters. They will only have to reply to an email that describes what we seek in our participants.

4) What is the duration of the program?

CFHI programs are 4 or 8 weeks long. All program fees specified are for a 4 week duration. If you choose to stay for a total of 8 weeks, your program fees will double (ex: the program fee for 4 weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico is \$1825, if you extended that for another 4 weeks for a total of 8 weeks your program fee would be \$3650). You may apply to two separate programs back to back if you would like (Example: Quito and Community Medicine, Ecuador programs for February and March). If you choose to do this, please email us at students@cfhi.org for instructions on how to do so without having to contact your references twice.

5) Are there set starting dates?

All of our programs begin on Saturday and end on a Saturday. Normally, these dates lie around the first of the month and run to the end of the month. Check specific program descriptions for exact dates. We ask that you ARRIVE at your program site on Saturday so that you may settle in and begin orientation on Sunday when possible. If you are a clinical year medical student and your rotation dates with your school do not coincide with the set dates, please contact the office and we will see if we can accommodate your needs.

6) What is the deadline for applications?

There are no application deadlines. We prefer to receive the applications at least 3-4 months in advance; however, some programs fill up nearly 7 months in advance, especially in summer. The advance notice allows us adequate time to make all the preparations according to your needs. Please inquire by email or phone about the space availability of the particular program and month that you would like to attend. Programs will close one month prior to the program start date.

7) How does CFHI choose the participants?

We accept a participant if we have a program place free and if they meet our eligibility requirements. Admission runs much on a first-come, first-serve basis. So if you are thinking of applying, try to send in your application as soon as possible. We make a decision based on your application form and two references from your University or professional contacts supplied on the application form.

8) Can individuals with little or no Spanish apply to programs in Spanish speaking countries?

Yes, we do accept individuals who speak little or no Spanish. Please be aware that the more Spanish you know before you go, the more medical experience you will get out of the program. At the very least go to your library and get some lessons on tape and study as much as you can. If you have little or no Spanish skills, we strongly suggest that you go at least 2 weeks early and take Spanish at the language school before the program starts. If you plan to do this, please contact students@cfhi.org after you are accepted into the program and we can provide you with the contact information of the language schools we work with.

9) Do you accept undergraduates in college as participants in your programs?

We do accept undergraduates who are 21 years of age at the time of participation to most programs.

10) Can I participate if I am under 21 years of age?

Due to a Board of Directors mandate regarding liability issues, we are not able to accept individuals into our international programs who are not 21 years old at the time of participation. If you are turning 21 during a program month, you may apply to a program during that month or after. We would like to accept as many participants as possible, but our programs cannot accommodate everyone. We want to give the opportunity to travel with our programs to the people with the most relevant coursework and experience available. If we were to offer the program to everyone who was interested, there would be no space for 1st year medical students and post-graduate pre-medical students looking to solidify their commitment to the health sciences.

PROGRAM COSTS AND FUNDING

11) Where does my program fee go?

Like most not-for-profit organizations that run international volunteer programs, CFHI's income is largely generated from our students' program fees. These fees are an essential way for us to run the programs for you and to support our international partners who host you - all at the same time. This does not necessarily mean that your entire fee goes only to the community where you work.

Let us explain by taking a quick look at what it takes to run an international organization like CFHI. There is a significant cost involved in answering your emails and calls, maintaining the website, doing the paperwork you require for your university, ensuring the quality of the programs and managing the finances of a multi-million dollar organization. In addition, it is important to remember that costs to do basic business functions in the US are several times the cost of doing business in the countries you visit. CFHI has a unique structure that allows our partners autonomy and fiscal stability.

At the same time, we manage a complicated series of programs throughout the world, maintaining accountability and transparency required for organizations working in the current global environment.

CFHI maintains an incredibly low single digit overhead (most funding agencies consider an overhead cost of less than 30% to be good, and less than 15% to be excellent). You can read more about nonprofit organization standards at www.guidestar.org.

You can also read about how CFHI is ranked by an independent charity watchdog, Charity Navigator by looking at CFHI's "Affiliations" page. All programs are offered "at cost", meaning that CFHI does not acquire any profit from student fees. The cost you pay is the cost of the package of services you receive. If you have concerns about the structure of the program, about pre/post-trip support or about the finances of the program, PLEASE DO NOT ask your local coordinators. It is not their job to address these issues, which should be brought up with the San Francisco CFHI staff only. This is to avoid hassle for our dedicated, hard-working partners and so that we can answer your questions most thoroughly and accurately about the global activities of CFHI.

ALL PROGRAM FEES ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE, and we trust you will not take advantage of the graciousness of your hosts by violating this CFHI standard.

12) What is the payment schedule once you are accepted into the program?

The application fee to a CFHI program is \$65 and is due at the time your online application is submitted. The \$350 deposit, which is applied toward the total cost of your program, is due within 30 days after acceptance to the program or 45 days prior to the start of the program, whichever comes first. All application (\$65) and deposit fees (\$350) are non-refundable.

The final balance of the program fee is due 45 days prior to the program start date. If you are accepted into to any program within 45 days before the start date, all program fees are due within 72 hours of acceptance, without exception.

13) Does CFHI offer any scholarships?

CFHI does offer a limited number of scholarships for specific programs. Normally scholarships are available for selected spring and fall programs. There is much more information on the "Scholarships" page, which is located here --> "Program --> "Global Health Education" --> "Scholarships".

14) What if I find a host family on my own or don't want to take Spanish classes?

CFHI strongly encourages you to stay with the host family with whom we place you. These families have experience with our students and our programs, so, they adapt easily to your cultural preferences and needs. If you choose to seek housing or have found housing outside of the program please contact us at students@cfhi.org

If you visit a Spanish-speaking country, we strongly encourage you to participate in the language portion of the program. Spanish courses are based on medical Spanish so even if you are a fluent or a native speaker, we believe the opportunity will be beneficial to you.

The more Spanish you know the more opportunity you will have to get a hands-on medical experience out of the program.

If you have any questions please contact us at students@cfhi.org. Please note: even if you do choose to find other housing arrangements, or do not take Spanish courses, your program fee will remain the same.

ROTATIONS

15) Are the rotations set and mandated, or does one have a say in them?

On your application, you will be asked what types of clinical preferences you have. It is VERY important for you to complete this section of the application. Your clinical rotations will be based on this information. This information is sent to your Medical Director before your arrival so s/he knows what you are interested in. They will try and incorporate those activities with your clinical rotations. For example, if you have a specific interest in pediatrics, they will try to place you in rotations with high interaction with children.

16) When do I get my rotation schedule?

The local Medical Directors will give you your rotation schedule during your first meeting with them, upon arrival. Depending upon availability, you can ask for changes or preferences after the first week of the program.

17) Is the program a hands on clinical experience or observational?

How much hands on experience you will be able to get on the elective will depend on the following factors (and others):

(1) **Whether you are a clinical or pre-clinical student**→If you are a fourth-year medical student or advanced level nursing student with good communication skills you can expect to see patients yourself under the supervision of your local preceptor. If you are pre-clinical you will be more in an observational role till the doctor can develop trust in your abilities. It is essential that you work hard to develop good relationships with the doctors in the program. You will get more hands-on experience if you advocate for yourself, and work to express your skills and comfort in the clinical environment. In that same light, if you do not know how to perform a clinical procedure, you should NOT do it. To read more about the ethical implications of doing medical work abroad, a great read is this article published in the Student British Medical Journal: "Rethinking Your Elective".

(2) **Your language ability**→While you are still getting to grips with your Spanish or other local language, you may find that the amount of direct work you will be able to do will be limited. As your language skills improve you can look forward to taking histories, conducting patient interviews, and discussing case studies with your clinical physicians. The experience is different for each and every participant depending on their individual skill set and the trust that they can build with their preceptors. In addition, sometimes local laws prevent you from providing direct clinical services, no matter what your level of education or certification in your home country. The physicians will try and involve you as much as possible so you must show interest, enthusiasm, drive and an ability to ask questions. The more outgoing you are, the more doors will open.

18) If I am a pre-medical student and I don't have the items listed in the sample suitcase reference guide, do I need to bring them?

ALL participants in CFHI programs are required to have a white coat with a nametag. You should receive a CFHI nametag in the mail. Alternatively, you can bring your own nametag, which can be pinned on the coat, or even one that sticks to the fabric if you do not have one embroidered. Please also bring one green and one blue set of scrubs if you have access to them. Some clinics REQUIRE scrubs. A pocket Medical Spanish dictionary in Spanish-speaking countries is also helpful. You DO NOT need to bring a stethoscope, or drug reference guide if you do not have them. If you do not have the required supplies check out www.Allheart.com, they offer these supplies at an affordable cost!

19) How can I get Academic Credit for this program?

Academic credit can be arranged with the cooperation of your university or school. After you are accepted, you may request an "elective letter" to be sent to you or your advisor with information about how you will be evaluated and basic roles and responsibilities of CFHI participants. Each program site has a Medical Director who will complete any on-site evaluation forms. It is very important that you carry these forms to your program site, and take responsibility for their completion and submission to your school. We also ask that you fax or mail a copy to CFHI to keep in your file. CFHI will not be held responsible for incomplete evaluation or credit.

20) What is a Clinical Journal?

All participants are expected to keep a Journal for the duration of the program abroad. It is very useful to write down your clinical and cultural experiences you have that relate to the program. You may transcribe this document into a word file and you may be asked to submit the journal upon return from the program. This document is used for program evaluation procedures as well as for academic credit if you need supporting documentation from a US based faculty physician.

21) Where can I obtain donated Medical Supplies to carry to the host country?

We will provide you* with a small box of useful clinic supplies to carry with you to the host country. The box will contain items that are helpful to the particular clinical sites you will work at. It will also contain a written inventory of the contents, as well as a letter to present to customs officials upon arrival if you are questioned or searched. We stress that it is important for participants to unpack the supplies we send you and repack them in with your luggage so that you are aware of what you are carrying and so you may conserve space in your packing.

If you would like to gather donations besides what we will send you, please contact the CFHI office at students@cfhi.org for more information about what types of supplies are useful, and ideas about where to solicit donations. It is important that all items are NOT expired.

CFHI sends over 500 participants a year to our partner sites. So, to you, your box may look small, but it all adds up, and does make a huge impact. * Unfortunately, we cannot send boxes of supplies to participants living outside of the United States due to customs regulations.

22) What about Customs Clearance for Medical Supply donations once I arrive in my host country?

You will not have any problems taking medical supplies out of the country. Please make sure to put all supplies in your checked luggage. Included in the medical supply box that we send, will be an Inventory Sheet and Customs Letter. The Inventory Sheet is to be handed over to the local preceptor during first-day orientation.

Please show the customs officials the letter only if you are searched or questioned as to why you are carrying the supplies. Due to possible delays and we strongly suggest that you re-pack the medical supplies into your own luggage before departing.

If problems arise at customs and officials are asking you for payments or bribes to carry the supplies into the country, we ask that you leave the supplies at the airport so you may pass.

23) Who do we approach if we have complaints or problems with the program?

If for some reason you have any problems with the program, please contact your local coordinator to try and resolve them. You can also speak to your medical director regarding clinical placements and issues. If for some reason you feel the need to contact us, please do so via e-mail. If you have questions about any financial aspects of the program, please direct them to CFHI in San Francisco.

If you have an emergency situation and you need to contact CFHI USA representatives after business hours, you may use the emergency contact phone number you have on your important numbers contact card. Please note that collect calls made to the CFHI office will not be accepted unless in case of medical, legal or other emergency. All formal complaints and withdrawal notices must be made in writing via e-mail or post to the CFHI office.

ACCOMMODATION

24) What types of accommodation are available while in the programs?

Accommodation varies from program to program. Please visit the program pages for details about accommodation. Many of the programs use homestay families to house participants individually or on a shared basis. The homestay feature allows for an unforgettable cultural immersion experience, and for many participants is one highlight of the program. Other types of accommodation include: small hotels, hostels, guesthouses, and dorm style accommodations. It is very important to note that all accommodation is provided for the program dates only. If you would like to stay longer with your host family, you must let the local coordinator know this at the beginning of the program, and you will be required to pay for those additional days to the local coordinator. Remember that there are new participants arriving on the last day of your program and everyone needs a place to stay!

25) Can I change my host family if I am not happy?

If for some reason you are unhappy with your family please talk to your local coordinator at your site. Please make sure to always discuss problems with your family, and it may be an issue of miscommunication. If things cannot be resolved on your own or with the help of the coordinator, you may switch families within the program.

26) Should I take gifts for my host family?

Yes, participants are encouraged to take small token gifts for the family they will be staying with. These can be chocolates; a book of photographs from your home area; or your local sports teams t-shirts or caps. Even household items that people may not buy for themselves, such as towels, are highly appreciated. Be creative!

27) Will I have email access while in the program?

In most programs you will be shown where internet cafés are located where you may use email and international phone lines. Email access is very affordable, and the international calls from these places, also are very reasonable. In some programs, you will be able to use computers in your coordinator's offices. Please ask once you arrive.

28) When do I get the information about my homestay family?

If you are participating in a program that has homestay family accommodation for the entire 4 weeks, you will receive it from the local coordinators via email approximately 2 weeks prior to your program start date.

29) Can I use the phone at my homestay family's house?

CFHI strongly encourages participants to use public phones whenever necessary. In most countries, you may purchase affordable phone cards that provide a limited number of minutes of phone time.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

30) When do I fly in?

Please arrange your international flight to arrive on your program start date. All dates listed on this website are Program Start Dates. The program runs from Saturday through Saturday for 4 weeks. At many program sites, there will be a mandatory Orientation with your program group and medical director on Sunday.

For Example, if the program start date is May 1st, please plan to arrive on May 1st.

Participants may also arrive early to travel independently before the start of the program. Please let us know if this is the case, so we can arrange for you to meet up with your local coordinators.

31) When do I fly out?

Each program lasts 4 weeks. The program arrival date is a Saturday, and the finishing date is 4 weeks following on a Saturday.

For example, if your program date starts on April 3rd, your ending date is May 1st. You may leave on this Saturday, as you will not be working on that day, but WILL be working on the day before, a Friday. Participants may also stay and travel independently if they wish.

32) Where do I fly in?

- If your program is in Ecuador, please fly into Quito.
- If your program is in Bolivia, fly into La Paz.
- If you are in the Introduction to Traditional Medicine Program or the Rural Himalayan Rotation Program in India, please fly into New Delhi.
- If you are in the Infectious Disease program in Mumbai, please fly into Mumbai (Bombay), India.
- If you are in the Clinical Rotation in Oaxaca, fly into Oaxaca City, Mexico.
- If you are in the Tropical Medicine on the Coast of Mexico, fly into Puerto Escondido.
- If you are in the Healthcare Challenges in South Africa program, please fly into Cape Town. If you are in the HIV/AIDS & Healthcare in South Africa program, please fly into Durban.

33) Where can I get cheap flights?

Although we realize you are a student, and in all likelihood on a tight budget, we recommend you make sure you buy flight tickets that give you the flexibility to re-arrange your travel plans at a later date. International travel, especially travel to developing countries, can be affected by many issues out of CFHI's control - sickness, natural disasters, political circumstances, etc.

It is much better to pay a little extra to have some flexibility and refund ability with your ticket, than to be stuck at the last minute if the situation abroad or at home leaves you unable to travel with CFHI.

While situations like these are rare, we want you to be as protected as possible from financial impacts that could result otherwise.

To get a cheap flight, you must try and call as many travel agents as possible. CFHI has preferred travel agents that we will share with you after you are enrolled. Their contact information is included in your handbook that you will receive after you have paid your program deposit, and available after your acceptance in the online resource area.

In our experience, international fares are very high if you call the airline directly or if you search on the web. Call your local travel agents and try and shop around as much as possible. Another good place to look is the travel section of your local newspaper for current deals by consolidators.

34) What time should I arrive?

Most international flights arrive late at night into Quito, and New Delhi. Someone will come and pick you up at the airport whatever the time of arrival. Since many of our participants arrive after 11:00 at night, our coordinators and homestay families are very used to picking up at late hours.

35) Will I be picked up at the airport?

Yes, you will be picked up at the airport by the local coordinator and taken to your homestay family or other accommodations (depending on the program). In some programs, your homestay family will pick you up from the airport. Once you are at home and settled, the coordinators will contact you to let you know when and where you will be meeting to receive your orientation and hospital schedules.

36) Do I need to get a visa?

More detailed information on this is in your country handbook that you will receive after we have received your deposit payment. For non-US passport holders, please check with the consulate of your country of residence for more information regarding travel to the country of destination. However, be aware that US Citizens must have a valid visa for India. Participants need to apply for a Tourist visa for India. A sample visa application form is provided in your country handbook.

37) What vaccinations do I need?

Detailed information on vaccinations will be available in your country handbook. This handbook is mailed to you after you have paid your deposit. You may also consult the CDC at www.cdc.gov/travel.

38) What should I pack?

A sample suitcase is included in your program guide that you will receive once we have received your final payment. Refer to this list when you are packing for your trip. You may also want to purchase a Lonely Planet guide or other travel guide for more information about climate and weather during the months that you will be in the host country.

39) What kind of insurance do I need?

CFHI provides international health and emergency medical evacuation insurance as a part of the program. The coverage is valid for six months from the start of the program. You will receive more information about this in your country handbook after you have paid your deposit, and via email once the policy is enacted.

SAFETY

40) Are the program locations safe? What precautions are taken to ensure my safety?

CFHI takes safety matters very seriously. All of our program sites are well prepared for any emergency situations and emergency plans are in place for natural disasters and international crises. We do not operate programs in countries where there are active travel warnings by the US State Department or in areas deemed dangerous by the US State Dept. Personal safety is controlled as much as possible at each program site.

Participants are placed in host families that have hosted others in the past, and all have been properly screened by the local coordinating agency (i.e. language school or organization).

When in public places, please be aware of your surroundings at all times, and travel in pairs or groups whenever possible.

Be vigilant about your surroundings and your awareness at all times. We advise that you do not drink alcohol excessively, and to never go out at night alone. Listen to your local coordinators at all times. They know the safety issues best in their own communities. Other site-specific safety tips are located in your program guide that you will receive after you pay your final payment.

MISCELLANEOUS

41) Why don't I set it up myself?

The CFHI programs are designed to give participants the most fulfilling possible experience. It is common that participants cannot afford to take more than 4 weeks as part of an elective, and we make it possible to use that relatively brief time fully. You would not be able to create the same experience in such a short period of time. Equally as important, CFHI provides a mutually beneficial partnership that honors the physicians and clinics with whom you work. We are a non-profit organization that aims to empower our partners and offer unforgettable experience to our participants.

While some people may have personal or professional contacts in another country, most do not. Without some form of preceptor or coordinator it is usually difficult to become involved in the health care areas of these countries in any meaningful way.

Through the network of hospitals, clinics and academic institutions with which we work, we provide the participants with a broad and comprehensive view of these international health care settings. Orientation issues such as language barriers and unfamiliarity with the structure and function of the health care system are dealt with gradually while the participants have already begun working.

In addition, the people who participate in CFHI programs have other participants with whom they can network. For many, being able to share experiences and talk about the differences in medicine abroad vs. at home is one of the most valuable parts of the experience.

42) What free time will I have on the program?

Evenings and weekends are free. Participants will be free to make travel plans on the weekends. CFHI does not make travel arrangements for you. However, our local coordinators can help you with any information or contacts you may need.