

Chapter 7

WHO DO YOU PLAN TO WORK THROUGH

There is a wide range of options for a dentist or health professional to choose from in any country of the world. In the following pages, there are broad categories of options you will find available and a brief discussion of each one. This will not cover everything that you may find available to you, but it can stimulate your thinking about the wide variety of options you have.

Governments commonly hire dentists to be qualified advisers to their Ministry of Health. Some hire dentists to train others for service such as dental nurses for their schools. There are opportunities to make good salaries working as a dentist in the Gulf oil region for oil companies. Dental school instructors are needed in most countries, but the pay varies from country to country. Clinicians are needed to update native dentists on the latest techniques. Normally, as in the United States, there are some malpractice advantages in working for the government directly. Also, it may not be necessary to qualify through a licensing board, if the federal government of that country hires you.

A University where the dental school is located for teaching is an opportunity. Some require you to see patients as well as teach. A license for the country would probably not be required for the teaching facility. However, the equipment you find in some foreign dental schools is quite inadequate to work with. I would advise visiting the institution before accepting any kind of position.

Church Facilities for dental practice will normally have donated equipment to use. Be sure the equipment has been properly installed and is not waiting to be installed. Be sure the equipment is in good working order and of a design you feel comfortable using. They can send you pictures of the dental facility, describe supplies, which are available, and provide an inventory. You may need to bring some favorite instruments or supplies, which you feel comfortable with, rather than what they have stocked. Also, it would be good to take extra supplies to leave at the clinic. Dental supplies can be expensive when they are available in other countries. A charitable clinic normally works on a very limited budget to deliver free or low cost service to the needy. Your donation of quality supplies and hand instruments will always be welcomed. Occasionally, dental supply companies will donate supplies if you approach them about the need. Dentists in your area may have a number of items they can donate. Advertise your need in the local dental society newsletter!

A registration or clinic license is normally required by the health department for a permanent church facility. You may need a work permit to practice in the church clinic or obtain a temporary dental license for your stay. Ask a lot of questions before you go, so you will be prepared for the church facility.

Hospital Clinics for general dental care and specialty service normally provide a great opportunity to work in a well-equipped hospital. But many times there are unbelievable needs that go unattended because of the need for specialty personnel and training. In third world countries, thousands of cases too complicated for the general practitioner go untreated because of the lack of specialty training. Some third-world countries may have specialty training, but inadequate equipment with which to work. Most of the industrialized countries have a good balance of nice equipment and qualified people to take care of their needs. I think all overseas countries are open to continuing education seminars and sharing of latest techniques. Be assured that most of their professionals are well informed and will desire to have a blue-chip CE presentation from an experienced clinician. CMDA has been very active giving CE courses overseas.

Licensing and Liability will vary from country to country. Be sure to check the laws of the land before performing any procedures and make certain you have access to the equipment and medicine you need. Pharmaceutical brand names may be different, but they should have the same generic formulation. Some countries have virtually no medicine available so you may have to take your own. Many hospitals in third world countries still do not have enough disposable needles. They use the same syringe and needle over and over again for many patients. Please check details about the hospital before you go to work, so you can be prepared. Also, it is nice when you can give them extra supplies to have on hand, if they are a hospital in desperate need.

Non-Profit Organizations who provide dental care to the population are more rare because of the expense involved to fund a clinic of this nature. Usually medical care is a priority and organizations gravitate toward primary care. Dentistry is more complicated and expensive to deliver on a donation basis. Bearing this in mind, many dentists donate their time and pay their own way to clinics of this type. They treat their needy people for a nominal fee or no fee at all.

As an example, Haiti has about two dozen dental clinics that need volunteers to work them. The equipment and extreme need is there, but certainly not enough trained professionals to go and donate time. Haiti is close and available with a lot of opportunities if you are looking for a low cost trip to help in a third world nation. Licensing and malpractice laws need to be checked for each country you consider.

For-Profit Organizations or a privately owned clinic is another possibility. This would be a dental office much like you would find in the United States. If you plan to work in this kind of facility, check on your dental license, malpractice,

and drug laws. Some countries permit the general public to buy many pharmaceuticals over the counter without a prescription. Of course, narcotics and more specialized drugs are by prescription. But for basic antibiotics and pain medicine you may not need a drug permit. Take some of your favorite hand instruments so you feel more at home. You may not care for some of the instruments that you find in the overseas clinic. There are some organizations, such as the **Christian Dental Society**, www.christiandental.org 573-578-8887, that rent portable dental equipment and instruments to their members to take overseas for a nominal fee.

Military Dental Practice is governed by its own chain of command. Licensing and clinic permits are not normally necessary through the service system. Civilian dentists are rarely permitted to work on a military base. But, some countries certainly welcome the opportunity to have a dentist set up and work for them, unofficially. Check to see what equipment is available to you and use good judgment when working with the military personnel in a foreign country.

The Independent Missionary sometimes operates as a non-profit corporation, association, or just by himself without an official organization. A non-incorporated or non-affiliated person who receives a donation of \$25.00 cannot give a legitimate tax-deductible receipt. Even if he gives you a receipt, it will not be valid when challenged by the IRS. It is best to work through a recognized church or charitable non-profit organization because of their ability to give legitimate tax-deductible receipts for donations of money or supplies. Their representative can receipt any donation of money or supplies. Also, the church or non-profit corporation should be recognized by the government of that country. It means you can receive shipments of supplies duty free through the customs officials of that country. (There are always exceptions.) In other words, it gives you status or legitimacy in a country when you work with a legally recognized entity.

When health care providers work with independents, they must be aware of the liability involved. There may be no legal protection as a foreigner in the event of a problem. In the event of a medical emergency, any foreigner will be at that country's mercy. Your constitutional rights stop at the U.S. border. They do not extend into a foreign country.

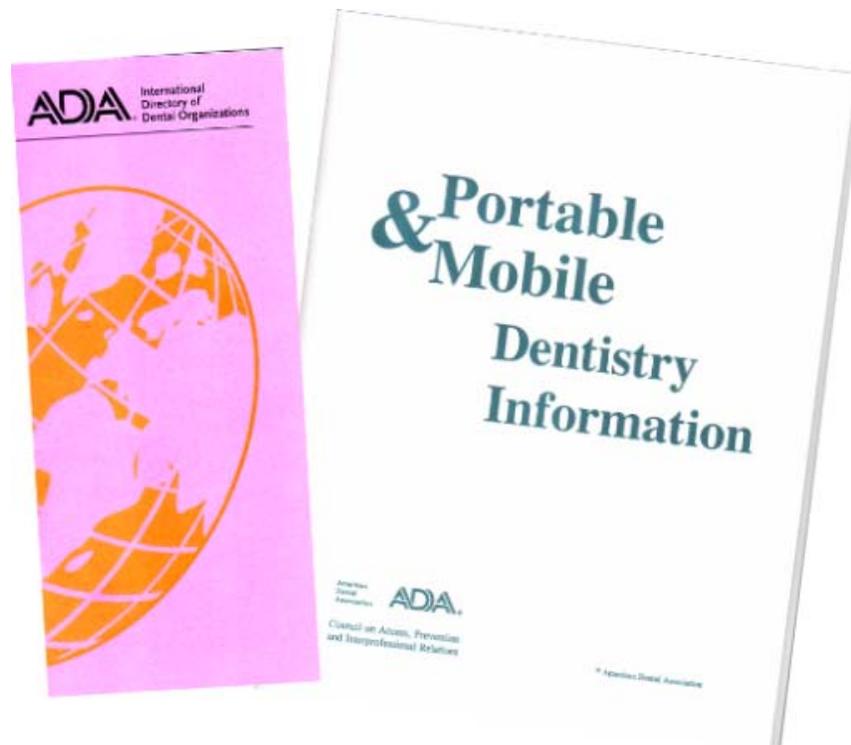
A Dental License and Work Permit for your country of service is something to check well in advance of departure. Malpractice and liability concerns should be high on your list of considerations. If you work for a legally licensed entity in the country, then you are also subject to possible lawsuits. These days there is more litigation for money against those who are perceived to have money or malpractice insurance, even overseas. "They see it on T.V!"

Retirement Benefits would also be an advantage of working through a church or non-profit corporation. I have known missionaries who worked their entire lives as independents on the mission field, and did not save for retirement. In the U.S. it is a requirement for all employers, including churches and non-profit corporations, to hold social security benefits and medicare out of each paycheck.

There are many opportunities for service here in the U.S. or abroad. **The American Dental Association (A.D.A.)** also has resources for you to explore your options. The A.D.A. Library Service has a number of publications available for you to check out and review. Their telephone number is 312-440-2500 or website www.ada.org.

Some of those publications available through the A.D.A. are:

- 1) *Developing Access Programs for Special Population Groups*
- 2) *Non-Traditional Practice Settings (Mobile and Portable Dentistry)*
- 3) *International Dental Volunteer Organizations: Service Directory*
- 4) *Health Volunteers Overseas*
- 5) *Guide to Dentists Overseas Employment (Out of Print)*
- 6) *International Directory of Dental Organizations (Internet only)*
- 7) *Non-Traditional Practice Settings – Developing New Ways to Practice Dentistry*



ADA Brochures

VOLUNTEERING WITH HVO: Answers to Some Common Questions



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HVO is CFC Code #0342 listed
under ISA, International Service
Agencies/ International Section

Who volunteers with HVO?

Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) is dedicated to improving the quality and availability of health care in developing countries through education. The cornerstone of the organization has always been our talented, innovative volunteers. Since 1986, more than 3,100 volunteers have served overseas with HVO and more than \$13 million of education materials have been donated to over 45 sites.

Who volunteers with HVO?

HVO sends qualified professionals overseas to train local health care providers in the following specialties: anesthesia, dentistry, general surgery, internal medicine, nursing, nurse anesthesia, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthopedics, pediatrics, and physical therapy. These highly skilled and experienced volunteers come from both private practice and university settings, with a significant number of retirees as well.

Where are HVO programs?

HVO has projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. Currently HVO supports over 50 projects in more than 25 countries. Each project is different depending on the educational needs and technological capacity of the country.

What do HVO volunteers do while overseas?

HVO is a teaching and training organization. HVO volunteers train local health care providers, giving them the knowledge and skills to make a difference in their own communities. Volunteers lecture, conduct ward rounds and demonstrate various techniques in classrooms, clinics and operating rooms.

How long do volunteers serve?

Most programs require that volunteers serve for one month, but there are some sites where one may serve for two weeks. There are opportunities for longer placements if a volunteer has the time available.

Can family members come too?

Spouses and families frequently accompany volunteers on their assignments. Often, family members are able to volunteer. Spouses without clinical training can work as teachers, administrators, or in some other capacity depending upon the site. Since certain sites are more accommodating than others, volunteers should contact staff to discuss the feasibility of their families accompanying them overseas.

Who manages the programs?

Each program is managed by a volunteer Program Director in North America who is a health professional with HVO experience. The Program Directors are responsible for screening and orienting volunteers. They also have extensive information about the sites, local customs, housing arrangements, health conditions, and other pertinent information.

While the HVO staff may help find the correct site, make logistical arrangements, and prepare the volunteers to teach, it is the Program Director and other returned volunteers who are the principal resources for clinically oriented questions and concerns.

The HVO staff is responsible for supporting and recruiting for all programs. Staff in the Program Department work closely with potential volunteers to determine what site is most suitable given his/her interests and expertise.

Improving Global Health Through Education

What Makes An Effective Volunteer?

Creativity
Flexibility
Sense of Humor
Willingness to Learn
Adequate Preparation
Commitment to Sharing
Knowledge & Skills

Volunteers **do not** need previous teaching experience to participate in HVO programs. Effective communication skills and teaching principles are covered in pre-trip orientation.



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What about expenses?

Volunteers pay for transportation to and from a program site. Many sites provide room, board, and daily transportation for volunteers once they arrive.

Since HVO is registered as a nonprofit with the US Internal Revenue Service, most travel and living expenses and related costs incurred by a volunteer are a tax-deductible donation. Volunteers keep track of their expenses and upon returning home, submit a Financial Contribution Form to HVO noting these expenses. HVO sends a letter of acknowledgement, which along with relevant receipts, can be used for income tax purposes.

What about insurance?

HVO volunteers, in their capacity as teachers rather than the primary providers of service, have not found liability insurance to be an issue. HVO also adheres to all local registration requirements in each country of service. On occasion this means that volunteers will have to submit documentation about their education, licensure and certification status.

As for travel or health insurance, HVO does not have the resources to provide any special policy to volunteers. We recommend consulting your insurance company regarding coverage provided by your policy while abroad. HVO's *Guide to Volunteering Overseas* has a list in the appendix of companies which provide travel and evacuation insurance.

What is the first step?

First become a member of Health Volunteers Overseas. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, which includes updates on all program sites. Dues provide the financial support needed to sustain the organization.

To begin the placement process, potential volunteers should complete the Volunteer Profile Form and return it to the HVO office. Completion of this form in no way commits you to volunteering, but it is the essential first step.

When I decide to go, how do I prepare?

Volunteers have numerous resources at their disposal to prepare for an assignment. The most effective volunteers are those who have taken the time to learn about the country where they will be of service as well as about the project.

All volunteers receive an orientation packet several months before they go overseas. This packet includes a program description, contact information as well as trip reports by previous volunteers. The packet also contains Department of State Background Notes, visa and insurance information, travel agent recommendations, immunization and health advice and other information pertinent to your site.

Another important resource for volunteers is the HVO *Guide to Volunteering Overseas*, a publication every volunteer should read before their assignment. This manual is provided free of charge to all volunteers and is included in the orientation packet. Additional copies are available for \$15 each by contacting the HVO office. The manual outlines the goals and methods, problems and pitfalls of short-term volunteer health work in a developing country.

Volunteers are advised to contact previous volunteers and the Program Director for insight into the HVO experience. They should be able to provide details about the trainees, their level of education, their English language skills, and what topics have been covered.

For historical, cultural and sightseeing information, volunteers can reach the host country through their library or on the internet. The goal of this preparation is to ensure that volunteers are relaxed and confident, with a thorough knowledge of the site's trainees and training needs.