Book Review

The Global Healthcare Volunteer's Handbook: What You Need to Know Before You Go

Kenneth V. Iserson, MD

Tucson, AZ: Galen Press, 2014

US \$28.95, 340 pages, paperback

For international volunteerism aimed at healthcare workers, Dr Kenneth Iserson covers the bases. He is relevant to many levels of training, from nonclinical roles to dentists, students and residents, nurses, and physicians. He begins with trip planning—personal health and prevention, local health risks, immunizations, passport and visa, and money issues, as well as local communication, travel, and food and lodging concerns. Then, he covers personal and realistic subjects such as the difficulties and challenges of international volunteerism and what it is like being away from home and out of your element. I especially enjoyed the section on cultural sensitivity. The discussions of culture shock and reentry shock were a nostalgic reminder of my own volunteer experience in Central America. Iserson nails it with practical knowledge about expectations, language

barriers, phone and computer communication, and cultural norms such as dress, eye contact, and eating habits.

Iserson's *Handbook* will fit in readily with wilderness medicine environments as well. Many of these experiences are in remote and austere areas of foreign nations, requiring various levels of travel and travel skills, in addition to the healthcare task. Iserson presents practical and logical suggestions about medical kits and how and what to pack for personal items, using nicely designed tables that make it easy to peruse the contents. At the back of the book are nearly 50 pages listing global healthcare organizations. For someone of any level of international experience or healthcare training interested in such an endeavor, *The Global Healthcare Volunteer's Handbook* does exactly what its title states: it tells you what you need to know before you go. This book will be valuable in a variety of situations and is guaranteed to teach you subtle tricks of being effective and culturally sensitive as a volunteer, as well as survival and safety during the mission.

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