

Tropical Medicine Elective



Elective Program Platform for Independent Study in International Medicine

Residency Elective Programs - Making A Difference in the South Pacific

The *Tropical Medicine Elective* is a partnership between **Sea Mercy** and the **Palmetto Health Emergency Medicine Residency Program** that provides a unique educational experience in international medicine. Sea Mercy is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2012 with the goal of bringing free health care to the remote islands of the South Pacific. Operating from our fleet of “Floating Health Care Clinics” (FHCC) vessels (large sailing catamarans), Sea Mercy has engaged the international sailing community, the international health care community, and the health ministries of their island nation partners in order to bring this much needed care to the thousands of remote inhabited islands. Sea Mercy’s goal is to establish recurring visits to the same remote islands providing health screening, preventative care, maintenance of chronic conditions, and treatment of acute illnesses.

Program Overview

Volunteering with Sea Mercy is a challenging educational experience. Volunteers spend a minimum of 2 weeks living on a large sailboat while traveling among remote islands in the South Pacific. Sea Mercy currently serves The Kingdom of Tonga and the Republic of Fiji. Each vessel typically visits 3-4 islands per week. Clinic schedules are greatly influenced by the weather and require volunteers to be flexible. The islands visited are typically small and minimally populated, sometimes with as few as 40 people living on the island. Getting from the boat to the island typically involves a short trip in a small dinghy and may require you to get wet. Depending on the size of the island, clinics may last anywhere from 2-5 hours. Community health inspections and home visits are common components of a clinic day. You will work alongside local staff (nurses, pharmacists, and sometimes physicians) who will help provide translation and act as the cultural liaison.



Dr. Peyton Hassinger, Medical Director & Residency Coordinator for Sea Mercy evaluating a remote island Tongan patient (May 2014)

Accompanied by local health ministry staff, volunteers spend 2 weeks aboard a large sailing catamaran delivering care to 5-8 remote South Pacific islands.



Objectives

1. Provide medical care to include health screening, preventative care, maintenance of chronic conditions, and treatment of acute illnesses.
2. Participate in teaching local staff.
3. Learn about tropical diseases specific to the South Pacific islands and apply this knowledge to patient care.
4. Develop competence in low-cost interventions to treat common medical conditions.
5. Develop competence in the practice of medicine in a resource-limited environment.
6. Develop administrative and leadership skills necessary for the practice of international medicine.
7. Learn about health care delivery in the Polynesian culture.

Bringing free health care to the remote islands of the South Pacific

www.seamercy.org



Requirements

1. Applicants must have a license to practice medicine. Limited or restricted licenses may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. Residents from all specialties are encouraged to apply.
3. Applicants must be in good standing in their residency program.
4. Medical students may apply; they must be accompanied by a supervising physician.
5. Minimum elective time is 2 weeks.
6. Applicants can bring a spouse or family member to join them, but they will be expected to participate in all activities.



Helping to pull a sail, evaluate a patient, test eyes, assist with a procedure, or distribute medicines, volunteers must be prepared and willing to assist in all areas of the program.

Queen and single bunk cabins are available, but you may be asked to share a cabin if the rotation is full. Costs are all-inclusive once on the vessel.



What to Expect

Expect the unexpected at every stop. Just like a day at the office or hospital, every day on the FHCC vessel brings something new. From an incredible sunrise or sunset, a pod of whales or dolphins, or a new remote village. Whatever the day brings, will be a memory that we hope you will treasure and share with others. Our sailing catamarans range from 45 to 65 feet in length and can carry from 4-8 volunteers. You will be sailing through one of four remote island groups; Ha'apai (Tonga), Vava'u (Tonga), Lau Group (Fiji), Yasawa Group (Fiji). Although each group consists of 12-30+ islands, we will visit only 5-8 per rotation.

Contact Us

To participate in this Tropical Medicine Elective program, or to provide it for your residency program, please contact:

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Cost

All of your expenses are tax-deductible. Depending on your city of origin, flights to the South Pacific islands average about \$1500. The program cost is a maximum of \$1995 per person, and there must be a minimum of 2 volunteers per 2-week rotation (you can bring your spouse or a family member). Larger groups can decrease the cost per person to as low as \$1,430. The program cost includes all your needs while on the boat (3 meals per day) and is designed to fund the boat's supplies, operating costs and maintenance. Sea Mercy is also able to assist you with fundraising for your trip by creating you a [Personal Fundraising Page](#).



www.seamercy.org
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