Preface

Travel and Adventure Medicine

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When your humble editors were in high school, adventurous kids traveled to France for a semester. Now it is routine for students—from elementary school to college—to visit remote and rustic destinations in low-income nations in South America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. International travel is on the increase to unprecedented levels, across the board, among tourists, athletes, volunteers, and those on business.

Medical providers who provide pretravel and/or posttravel care must familiarize themselves with common threats to international travelers to low-income nations as well as common illnesses seen in illreturned travelers. Caring for those who reside in a high-income nation does not prepare us to care for travelers to low-income destinations: both infectious and noninfectious problems may differ significantly from those encountered in wealthier regions of North America. The regular appearance of new infectious threats is the rule rather than the exception, and vaccine indications and schedules are forever changing. Thus, pretravel medicine providers are obligatorily students for life.

In former times, pretravel care consisted of receiving some immunizations, malaria prophylaxis, and little else. And while pretravel vaccinations and malaria prophylaxis are important components of the pretravel consultation, we now know that the greatest threats to international travelers are noninfectious; they include traffic injuries and drowning. Taking into account a traveler’s personal medical history, itinerary, and planned activities, the pretravel provider can reduce the risk from threats as disparate as influenza and motorcycle crashes.

A panoply of new sports, from flying in wingsuits to zorbing, has arisen in recent years. Research on the health implications of these nascent sports is scant but rapidly accumulating. It is our hope that this collection of articles will help pretravel and posttravel medical providers provide state-of-the-art care to their travelers.

A wide range of travelers—from newborns to the elderly, from Iron Man triathletes to those debilitated with chronic illnesses—are traveling to increasingly remote destinations. Given that medical care in most low-income nations lags behind that practiced
in high-income nations, it is important to minimize the odds of illness and injury while abroad and counsel travelers regarding self-treatment and accessing appropriate medical care should a mishap occur.

Many travelers recall their time overseas as high points of their lives. Appropriate pretravel advice and screening, safe practices while abroad, and well-informed post-travel care can help to ensure that travelers return home with fond memories and an appetite for further international travel.

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