

IPSL's Medical Volunteering Ethics Policy:

In the international education, service-learning and volunteering fields there is much discussion around whether or not medical service and volunteering can be ethical. Students and volunteers will find that many reputable western international education organizations will promote standards that severely limit activities when it comes to medical service and volunteering. IPSL respects these standards and encourages their students to take note of the current ethical standards and guidelines put forth by the FORUM on Education Abroad and the Working Group on Ethics Guidelines for Global Health Training (WEIGHT).

The first and foremost concern of IPSL when placing students in medical service settings is to respect the needs, desires, and wishes of the local community and the local organizations and individuals the students are serving with. IPSL works to promote equity and mutually beneficial partnerships with all local and international partnerships. Therefore students are encouraged to engage in this ethical conversation around what is ethical in medical service and volunteering with IPSL staff, faculty, other students and their service site.

Students are responsible for keeping the following in mind when engaging in medical service and volunteering:

- Students must always keep the welfare of the patient foremost in their mind. This is not the opportunity for proving yourself. Recognizing patient autonomy is one of the core values of medical ethics; it is particularly important to honor in communities with limited resources, where all patients must be given the choice whether or not to have trainees/volunteers involved in their care.
- Every act of service involves the building of a cultural bridge. Students should bring knowledge of the history and culture of the community they will serve, respect for cultural differences, a listening and learning attitude, and behaviors that will enable ethical and effective service. Health care professionals in the country being served will likely have a deep understanding of local health care issues, resources and challenges. Be sensitive to the concerns of the local health care team and seek to understand the perspective of the patients you are serving. Recognize and respect divergent diagnostic and treatment paradigms. Students are not there to instruct or to change systems.
- It is appropriate for students to provide preventive health education and to support the health care team by assisting in the provision of health treatment after receiving adequate instruction. However, students should never engage in any unsupervised activity that is considered the practice of medicine.



IPSL is responsible for adequately addressing the following in order to provide ethical medical service placements for their students. IPSL will ensure that:

- The local communities needs, desires, wishes, and voice are heard, respected and adhered to by all IPSL staff, students and volunteers.
- The burden to the host community and organization is minimized as much as possible and that there are no instances of global health training that benefits the trainee at the cost of the host.
- The local community, local organization, and individuals the students are interacting with are aware of the level of training and experience of each student so that appropriate activities are assigned and patient care and community well-being is not compromised.
- All IPSL staff, students and partners are aware and respectful of the differences in norms of professionalism (local and sending), standards of practice (local and sending) and diagnostic and treatment paradigms.
- As an organization IPSL and IPSL students are engaging with existing healthcare and public health organizations and are not ignoring, displacing, disregarding or circumventing those organizations and professionals by providing experiences outside of those systems.
- That IPSL Students are educated to understand the local culture that influences the healthcare and public health of the community and that students are prepared to function professionally and interact appropriately with local practitioners and community members.
- That IPSL volunteers are given the tools to know how to say “no” to a request they determine is beyond their skill level, knowledge, or that could create a dangerous situation for themselves and/or others.