**Malawi Elective Rotation Information Guide**

*Guide applicable for medical students, PA students and residents*

January and February 2016

Welcome to Malawi. We hope you are getting excited for your rotation with Dr. John Podgore and Mrs. Ione Podgore. This guide, updated yearly, was written by a previous medical student on rotation to help you better plan for your rotation or decide if this rotation is the right one for your needs. You will arrive at the beginning of the rainy season. The weather will be warm and mild with lots of rain. The landscape will be green.

**Malawi Basics**

* Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa and is bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique.
* The capital city of Malawi is Lilongwe, a city of more than a million people located in the Central Region of the country
* Population is 16.7 million people (2014 census); 85% are subsistence farmers
* Area is the approximate size of Pennsylvania
* One of the poorest countries in the world; the World Bank gave it the designation of being the poorest country in the world for the year 2014.
* Electricity and running water are not available to 88% of the population
* The national language is Chichewa but all the health care records and rounds are in English (mostly British style). Streets are signposted in English as are signs on commercial buildings. Clerks in the local stores speak English. Many patients from the village will speak only Chichewa but the Malawi health workers will translate for you.
* The monetary unit is the Malawian Kwacha. The rate of exchange is about MK 700 to $1.
* Poverty and inequality remain stubbornly high in Malawi.

**Area Accommodations Information**

You will be staying with Dr. and Mrs. Podgore in their house on the campus of Daeyang Luke Hospital and University, founded and operated by a South Korean charity. The facilities are located in a rural area outside Lilongwe between the Kamuzu International Airport and the city of Lilongwe. The Podgore’s will pick you up from the airport if you send them your flight information. The house is adjacent to a 180-bed hospital. The compound also houses a nursing college, an IT degree program and a medical school complex that is under construction. The housing is encircled by a tall brick fence that was built to deter crime but also to prevent the hyenas from entering and chewing up the tires on the vehicles. Guards are on duty 24-hours a day. It is safe to run/walk outside if you will be exercising. Females must run with a companion if they venture outside the main hospital gate.

The Podgore home is well built and functional, especially compared to Malawi standards. There are two small student bedrooms, each with two twin beds with mosquito nets. The bedrooms have locking wardrobes and there are locks on the bedrooms doors. Two electrical outlets are located in each of the bedrooms to plug in computers, phones, etc. (220 volt British plugs). These bedrooms share a bath with a shower. On the other side of the house are the master bedroom and a study/extra bedroom that is enclosed by heavy-duty curtains. The futon in this room provides sleeping accommodation for another person (or two, if small). The house is not air-conditioned but every room has a portable fan. There is no Wi-Fi but a dongle (flash drive type device) can be purchased at the local phone company. You will be issued a local cell phone to call locally but not internationally. Skype/gmail/WhatsApp will work with the dongle.

James, the cook and houseboy, has worked for the Podgore’s for several years. He likes to cook and his favorite food is any dessert! He cleans, does the laundry and keeps the house running smoothly from Monday morning until Friday afternoon. He is a good person. Nothing has gone missing and he actually returns lost money found around the house or in pockets of trousers in the laundry.

**What to Wear**

You will be arriving at the end of the dry hot season and the beginning of the rainy season. Bring shorts for inside the house only. Because of the conservative culture of Malawi it is best if females keep their shoulders and knees covered outside the house.

Long skirts, skirts just below the knee and trousers are acceptable. Bring clothing appropriate if you plan to attend the local Sunday church service or a special event in Lilongwe. Men wear trousers. They are rarely seen in shorts unless at the beach, or playing sports. Scrubs or clinic attire are acceptable at the hospitals.

You will use your white coat at the hospital. If you are going into the OR (called theatre here) you will need separate scrubs that you change into and separate shoes (crocks, rain boots, etc.) that you only wear in the OR. The hospital is strict on this policy. Students departing Malawi in previous years have donated numerous sets of scrubs and these are at the house in the “lending closet.” Most sizes are available. The supply in the lending closet is available if you run out of your scrubs or your luggage gets delayed.

Yes, luggage does get delayed. Bring PJs and enough clothing for a day in your carryon bag in the event this does happen.

**Hospital Information**

Currently we rotate at several different sites:

1) Daeyang Luke Hospital: This is a private 180-bed hospital adjacent to the housing compound. Pediatrics, IM, OB, General Surgery and Casualty Care (emergency room) are available. It is smaller and a little slower paced than Kamuzu Hospital, but easy to access, more organized, more teaching staff, and there are options for evening emergency room and surgery.

2) Kamuzu Central Hospital: Large public hospital in Lilongwe, VERY limited resources, overcrowded, but a great experience to learn all kinds of pathology. IM is unorganized and teams will run without attendings (sometimes without residents). OB/GYN on the other hand started as a Norwegian outreach and now Baylor OB/GYN runs a very efficient and student friendly international fellowship. Patients have good antenatal and postnatal care, however, still with limited resources.

3) Baylor HIV Pediatrics Clinic-adjacent to Kamuzu (BIPA – Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative), associated with Baylor Medical School and Texas Children’s Hospital focuses on pediatric HIV management. The facilities are very nice, it is well organized and the teaching is excellent.

4) The fistula clinic at Bwaila Women’s Hospital is a new site and is an excellent opportunity to experience fistula repair surgery.

5) Cincinnati Children’s Pediatric residency program staffs the Kamuzu Pediatric ER and ward. They are very nice in involving our students and residents in their program.

**Items to Bring**

* Passport: Check expiration day as it must be current for 6 months after your arrival. It is recommended that you carry a copy of the first page of your passport and it should be kept in another location other than with or in your passport.
* Visa for entrance into Malawi: Entrance visa to Malawi is required as of October 1, 2015. Google “Embassy of the Republic of Malawi, Washington D. C” for email address. Download application form and pertinent information from this site. You will not be able to board your outgoing flight without the stamped visa in your passport. It may take several weeks to receive your visa so plan accordingly
* Immunization record - update all immunizations where needed
* Printed copy of your flight information
* Student ID: The Medical Council of Malawi will need to examine your student ID before your student permit is issued
* Photos: Two passport size photos are needed for your student permit with the Medical Council of Malawi
* Hard copy of travel insurance (Emergency Evacuation minimum $90,000 recommended by school and State Department.) Medical students may already have this insurance if they have the UNT student insurance.
* Contact phone numbers of your family in the event Dr. Podgore needs to reach them in the event of an emergency
* Money: Bring mostly $100 bills (clean and not torn, series 2013 and above) plus some smaller bills for settling expenses among your group. Money belt or similar to keep on your person while travelling especially when sleeping on the plane. Keep your smart phone out of site when sleeping
* Malaria prophylaxis: (Mefloquine, Doxycycline or Malarone)
* Five pair of scrubs
* Medical equipment if you have it (or you will be searching forever at the hospitals). This includes stethoscope, otoscope, ophthalmoscope, pulse ox and glucometer – a cheap one with strips to use and then leave with nurses or doctors on departure)
* Fanny pack or cross purse to carry medical equipment while in hospital
* Hand sanitizer (portable for use in the hospitals and clinics)
* Camera or cellphone camera. Former students recommend a one-month international plan through your cellular provider with unlimited texting with a minimum of 500 mb of data included
* Laptop computer, flash drive for power point presentation
* Headphones (for long car rides)
* Water bottle to fill in morning with filtered water from the house
* Snacks!! Nuts, chocolates, protein bars and trail mixes (for addition to lunches when away from Daeyang Luke Hospital.) Snacks can be purchased locally but these are never as good!
* Flip Flops or slippers to wear inside the house…easy on easy off. Shoes worn outdoors are left at the entrance to the house
* Light jacket, windbreaker or rain jacket. Sun hat for weekends.
* Bathing suit if going on safari
* Book to read for leisure although there are some at the house
* Movies/TV shows on computer
* A recent Malawi travel guide might come in handy (1 per group)
* Running/walking gear at Monday night community runs (AKA Hash House Harrier runs- you will just have to experience it.)
* Hiking shoes for hiking and safari (optional)
* Umbrella during the rainy season (There are some available at the house)
* Optional: Your favorite recipe. If you bring and if the ingredients are available, James, the cook will make it
* Optional: Pens: Cool looking drug-rep pens are the best. They are like “friend currency” here and you will make fast friends with the nurses or anyone else if you bring some to give away.

**Items NOT to Bring:**

* Hair dryer (or any other 110 voltage items)
* Sheets and blankets
* Towels (one small one is okay for safari but good towels are available at house)
* Detergent

**Items to Bring or Share**

* Bug spray - must contain Deet above 20% to be affective
* Sunblock (especially if you are on Doxy for antimalarial)
* Shampoo/Conditioner/Body Wash and Soap (Most brands are available in country but it is best to carry a supply with you for initial use)
* Disinfectant wipes – several packages of 20. These are available in Lilongwe but at a higher price and not all brands available
* Hand Sanitizer. Bring a small bottle per person and refill from larger bottles at the house

**Activities**

* Lake Malawi at Salima (Senga Bay) Saturday getaway with car and driver to shop at the Vendors (wood crafters) prior to spending a couple hours on the beach at Lake Malawi.
* Liwonde National Park in Malawi – Mvuu Safari. Amazing sites and animals. No big cats but lots of elephants, zebras, crocs, impala, etc.
* Three-day safari to the magnificent South Luangwa National Park in Zambia.
* Weekend at Monkey Bay – with a boat safari on Lake Malawi.
* Hiking to the top of Mt. Nkhoma with a couple of guides (one hour drive from Daeyang Luke) and a 3-hour hike up to the top of the mountain.

**ITEMIZING THE EXPENSES –**

* Airfare: DFW to LLW $ 1700 - $2.000
* Lodging, food, laundry for four weeks 500
* Transportation (Fuel is $6-7 a gallon) 50
* Visa to enter Malawi 100
* Medical Council of Malawi – Student permit 150
* Tip for Cook/houseboy (your choice)
* Other miscellaneous expenses or purchases 200 - 500

**Optional Expenses**

* 3-day safari to Zambia game park 400
* Park fees at South Luangwa Park @ $25 per day 75
* Visa to enter Zambia 50
* Visa to re-enter Malawi 100

**Advice for Success**

* Try to be flexible! Plans may change at the last minute and that is especially true if your group is large and rotations have to accommodate multiple people.
* Water may not be available at the house. Bucket showers will be available. International travel would not be complete without a few bucket showers.
* Africa has bugs. Many bugs. The house is relatively free from them but you will be around bugs everywhere so repellent comes in handy.
* Make friends fast by giving away American items. Consider giving away some of your scrubs to nurses or interns prior to your departure. Pens, T-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. will do as well. For kiddos, stickers are great and so are balloons.
* Stop and look at the scenery as much as possible. It is soooo beautiful here!

**Students:** Please add to this guide as you go and update it for future students. We hope you enjoy your rotation in Malawi, the warm heart of Africa!

**A quick note from Mrs. Podgore**

**Students should plan to arrive in Lilongwe the Sunday prior to their rotation and depart the Friday of their fourth week of rotation. Any deviations should be cleared in advance.**

Hunger is everywhere. When I asked a young man who was doing some small jobs at our house if he was hungry he rose to a standing position and became consumed in laughter. He said the entire country was hungry.

With this in mind, do not eat your lunch in public view of others who may have no lunch. If you do, be prepared to share whatever you have with them.