

U.S. Clinical Experience

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**Updated by Logan Felix, MD '08 (April 2010)*

Introduction:

Having US clinical experience has many advantages. For an undergraduate who plans to do residency training in the US, this may open the opportunity for postgraduate training in the US. Some residency programs require US clinical experience before being considered for a position. By doing a rotation in a US healthcare institution, a prospective residency candidate will come in contact with faculty members who may be willing to write letters of recommendation. The candidate may even be considered for a residency position in the same institution based on performance and work experience. For others who seek added instruction and experience for practice in the Philippines, the knowledge gained during exposure in US facilities may be shared with colleagues to improve local health care.

The UP College of Medicine allows **Off-Campus Elective Rotations** in US institutions. This usually is allowed during the summer break before year level (YL) 6.

Off-Campus Elective Rotations:

Recommended procedure for obtaining an off-campus elective rotation is outlined in the steps below:

1. **Choose a specialty and institution** – Decide on a specialty then search for a medical school or teaching hospital that offers electives to international students. Majority of US medical schools and their affiliated hospitals offer rotations to outside students. Use the internet as a primary search tool to find out the contact information and email addresses of programs. Send a letter expressing interest in that particular institution. Also ask about available faculty preceptors, prerequisites, schedule availability (April to May), cost (some will charge for the rotation), as well as student facilities and housing. Send letters to several institutions and make your selection from your narrowed list of choices.

[**L. Felix*: If you are planning to do a residency in the United States, the choice of specialty as well as the institution in the United States where you did your elective will play a big part in your application for residency as well as in affecting your desirability to residency programs during your interviews. Pick the specialization where you plan to apply to in the United States after medical school and pick a reputable and prestigious institution that can offer you meaningful, hands-on, relevant patient interaction as well as learning opportunities and didactics.]

You may also choose a specialty or institution based on personal contacts. You

may identify a US-based UPCM graduate from the database of UPMAS Peers Program volunteers who will serve as your preceptor for the rotation.

2. **Secure a tourist visa** - If you do not have one, first obtain a passport. Visit <http://manila.usembassy.gov/www3024.html> for complete information on US non-immigrant visa applications. All applications are now carried out online. You then will need to use the online VISAPPOINT system to schedule your interview. At the time of this writing, waiting time for available appointment is one month, however this may take longer so start preparations early. During the interview, you may be asked for documentary proof for current status a medical student, ability to fund trip or plans in the US. It is recommended that you prepare the following documents:

- ❖ TRAVEL ITENERARY
- ❖ PASSPORT with PHOTOCOPY of the FIRST and LAST PAGE
- ❖ CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH
- ❖ CERTIFICATE OF ENROLLMENT from UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES COLLEGE OF MEDICINE (you can ask Ate Lucy for this. I think this costs P50 and takes around 3-5 working days to get it from her)
- ❖ TRUE COPIES of APPLICANT'S THIRD YEAR REGISTRATION FORMS and VALIDATED SCHOOL ID
- ❖ APPLICANT'S BANK CERTIFICATION and PASSBOOK for a PESO SAVINGS ACCOUNT, DOLLAR SAVINGS ACCOUNT and ATM CARD for a SAVINGS ACCOUNT
- ❖ DECLARATION OF SUPPORT from your relative or contact abroad
- ❖ DECLARATION OF SUPPORT from your parents or guardian
- ❖ PARENT'S PASSBOOK, BUSINESS PERMIT AND LAND TITLES

It is recommended that you first secure a US visa to guarantee that you can actually go for your elective. You may choose to proceed to other steps in the process while waiting for your visa but run the risk of investing much time and resources and still not be able to go if your visa application is denied.

3. **Fill out an Off-Campus Elective form** - Obtain form (PHP 20 fee) from the office of the Associate Dean for Academic Development (ADAD). There will be many signatories required on this form so this will take time to accomplish. More on this later.
4. **Prepare a learning contract** - Provide details of the elective including location, objectives and name of faculty preceptor. Present your learning contract to the ADAD for further discussion and approval.
5. **Acceptance Letter** - Furnish a copy of your Learning contract with your Faculty preceptor. In turn, he or she will provide the College with an acceptance letter detailing and confirming the elective plan as well as their responsibilities towards your learning and education.

6. **Obtain remaining signatures for Off-Campus Elective Form** – The other signatories are difficult to find. Many have positions in UPCM or PGH but spend most of their time in outside clinics or hospitals. Be prepared to search them out. Find out who they are, get their details (contact numbers, outside clinic/office address) from their department secretary in UPCM/PGH.
 - a. **Academic Committee chair of YL6**
 - b. **YL 6 Chair of Electives**
 - c. **Supervising consultant** (from the department of your chosen specialty)

After you have all the signatures, bring back form to ADAD for final approval. Then have it signed by the **Dean** and **College Secretary**.

7. **Register for elective during enrollment** – Hold on to form until enrollment in April. There will be an added application fee of approximately PHP 2000.
8. **Make travel arrangements** – Once you have a tourist visa, an approved learning contract and a completely signed application form, you can scout for airline tickets. You may go to travel agencies in the area or buy you ticket online.

[**L. Felix*: If you find yourself in the situation that you have already finished with a clinical elective here in the Philippines or anywhere aside from the United States and you are still interested in getting US clinical experience, you have the following options still available to you:

- If you have not yet graduated from medical school, it is still fairly easy to get hands-on clinical experience (which is much more valuable than the alternative which will be discussed later) in the United States. These externships, as they are called, can easily be found by searching online and are very similar to the clinical electives available to you as a YL6. The big difference is that you have to do this on your own free time and that most often, there is a fee to be paid. Some institutions also only offer externships to accredited medical schools, so find out beforehand if UP-PGH students are allowed to do externships with their program.
- If you have already graduated from medical school, things get much harder. It virtually is impossible to get any hands-on experience after you have received your diploma because of liability and insurance issues. The alternatives left are observerships wherein the rotator is only able to observe but not participate in any clinical hands-on activity. Though some debate the value of having observerships in your resume, for some they believe that it is better than having no experience at all. As with clinical electives and externships, it is more valuable to have an observership in academic institutions and residency programs. However, since getting an observership at academic hospitals is very hard to achieve, the alternative

would be to get an observership with private practitioners in the specialization of your choice. Contacts play a key role here and it would be a good idea to get in contact with the local alumni association to find alumna willing to accommodate you and have you observe their practice.]