Managing Risk

This guide has been kindly offered by the University of Dundee and is based on experience from arranging student elective placements in Malawi

These notes give an overview of some of the risks you need to be aware of. There will be more discussion in the briefing sessions.

1. Hospital Safety

The overall aim is to maximise experience whilst minimising risk:

- HIV rate is about 25-30% in hospital patients, higher in those on the medical wards (about 80%). There is also risk of Hep B and Hep C. In general therefore it must be assumed that all patients potentially have a blood borne virus.

- Managing the risk. This has four elements:
  - Prevention by education– especially training before departure. Read and follow general precautions in the H&S guides eg ensure sharps boxes at hand when doing procedures, use universal precautions including wearing appropriate eye protection etc.
  - Prevention by risk assessment and restriction of individual activities while overseas (see below for more details)
  - Prevention by facilitating changes in the ward environment
  - ‘Rescue’ in event of exposure through clear protocols for use PEP and follow-up and advice if needed.

Restrictions on practice: This is based on a ‘traffic light’ system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples of procedures*</th>
<th>Precautions</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| A              | Controlled situation, elective procedures very minor, virtually ‘no touch’ technique | • Ordinary clinical examinations  
• Simple procedures eg: LPs, taking blood, putting in drips, paracentesis  
• Assisting at normal deliveries | Universal precautions as for high risk patients in the UK  
Includes wearing eye protection |
|                | Predictable  |                         |             |
|                | Few sharps with little possibility of injury |                         |             |
| B              | Less controlled situation, unpredictable patient or environment  
May not be predictable | • Required to assist in emergency situation eg need to stop bleeding from open wound etc,  
• Taking blood from an aggressive patient | Carry a pair of gloves and eye protection with you all the time. |
|                | Hands inside body cavities, unpredictable environment – but can be avoided | • Assisting in major surgery / suturing;  
• Assisting at C-sections;  
• Sewing up episiotomies | Do not do! |
|                | Predicable   |                         |             |