



Health Volunteers Overseas
Transforming Lives Through Education

Oncology Honduras Project Description

GOALS: To provide teaching and training in medical and pediatric oncology to staff (physicians, nurses, lab personnel, etc.), residents and students at three hospitals in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. Training activities fall under six main categories:

1. Pathology
2. Cancer Control
3. Medical/ Pediatric/Surgical/Radiation Oncology Seminars and/or Workshops
4. Curriculum Development
5. Student and Resident Education
6. Nursing Education

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Please note: Potential volunteers should not contact Project Directors until they have submitted a CV, a Supplemental Volunteer Information form and contacted a recruiter at the Washington office.

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LENGTH OF ASSIGNMENT: Assignments range from 1 – 4 weeks.

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS: Volunteers must be appropriately trained and credentialed healthcare professionals who specialize in oncology. This includes physicians (medical, radiation, gynecologic, and surgical oncology, among other specialists), laboratory professionals, and nurses. Volunteers need to have been in active practice for at least 5 years or be certified in their oncology specialty and provide HVO with a current CV, a copy of their current medical/nursing license and, for surgical volunteers, a list of which surgical procedures they currently are permitted to perform based on their current hospital credentials. Final year oncology fellows or physicians who have recently completed their fellowships or do not have active hospital privileges must be paired with physicians who meet all the eligibility standards above.

Volunteers approved for an assignment must provide electronic copies of the following documents to Claudia Calderon, at c.calderon79@yahoo.es:

- A copy of the information page from a passport
- CV
- Copy of a current license to practice medicine/nursing
- Copy of board certification letter or oncology nursing certification

PROJECT: This project focuses on the ongoing development of an oncology training program for both adult and pediatric oncology at three healthcare facilities in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras: the Hospital Escuela Universitario and the Hospital San Felipe, and the Cancer Center Emma Callejas. Volunteers who are board certified in the following areas are needed: gynecologic oncology, hematology, hospice and palliative medicine, medical oncology, oncology nursing, oncology pharmacy, pathology, pediatrics (including pediatric oncology and pediatric specialties), clinical pharmacology, radiation oncology and surgery (including surgical oncology and surgical specialties). Volunteers, depending on individual expertise and skills, work towards meeting specific objectives within six main categories:

Pathology

- Provide training in cyto-pathology
- Provide training in hemato-pathology
- Provide training to pathology personnel in immunohistochemistry to increase diagnostic abilities

Cancer Control

- Assist with the development of a nationwide cancer registry
- Provide training in cytologies and subsequent colposcopy to improve the chances of early cervical cancer detection
- Training in breast cancer screening – Examination and Mammography
- Training in screening for the most common other cancers in the country such as gallbladder, colo-rectal, retinoblastoma, among others

Staff Seminars and/or Workshops

- Provide training and education for oncology nurses
- Pediatric oncology nursing management of immuno-compromised patients
- Adult oncology nursing education in management of immuno-compromised patients as well as patients receiving radiotherapy
- Brachytherapy procedures for gynecological malignancies, lectures and training

- Provide continuing medical education courses for the current oncologists. Topics could include:
 - Surgical oncology
 - Hepato-biliary Cancers
 - Head and Neck Surgery
 - Thoracic oncology
 - Breast Cancer Management
 - Gynecologic-Oncology
 - Pediatric Oncology
 - Medical Oncology and Hematology:
 - Leukemias and Lymphomas
 - Solid Tumors: Breast cancer, cervical cancer, hepato-biliary cancers, gastro-intestinal cancers [esophageal, gastric, colo-rectal and pancreatic cancer], soft tissue sarcomas and head and neck cancers
 - Radiation Oncology
 - Combined lectures with Medical Oncology and Pediatric Oncology
 - Lectures for physicists, dosimetrists and therapists
 - Brachytherapy lectures
 - Palliative and supportive care services including pain management, nutritional and psychological support
 - Pediatric oncology surgery, liver cancer surgery, and gynecological oncology
 - Pharmaceutical topics related to oncology

Curriculum Development

- Collaborate with local contacts to develop medical and surgical oncology curriculum

Student and Resident Education

- Provide lectures and presentations to residents and medical students as part of their current training programs
- Assist in development of residency programs in Pediatric Oncology and Hematology
- Assist in development of residency program in Adult Medical Oncology and Hematology

Nursing

- Assist in development/implementation of chemotherapy guidelines
- Provide lectures and presentations on cancer care including palliative/end of life care, symptom management, and other specific topics such as breast and cervical cancer
- Provide training in psychosocial aspects of nursing care and communication skills
- Lead focused workshops on selected topics

Training is conducted at all three facilities. There are currently (2009) less than 20 trained medical, radiation and surgical oncologists in the country. Depending on the needs of the facilities and the expertise of the volunteer, volunteers may be asked to work in more than one facility during the assignment. In addition, to utilize expertise of selected volunteers, other goals and objectives for the project specific to individual facilities will be developed by the project directors, on-site coordinator, and volunteer.

The **Hospital Escuela Universitario**, which has approximately 800 beds, is the main teaching hospital for the University of Honduras School of Medicine. There are currently four trained pediatric hematology-oncologists on staff, one medical oncologist, and no surgical, radiation, or gynecological oncologists. There are opportunities to teach medical students. There is a pathology

department as well, although resources are limited and basic. The hospital has a biochemistry and microbiology lab and a blood bank with limited resources. There is no library at the Hospital Escuela but there is one at the adjacent university which contains both the medical and nursing schools. The hospital sees about 260 new pediatric oncology patients each year with about 40% of them presenting with acute leukemias. There is no program for palliative/supportive care. There is a six-chair outpatient chemotherapy infusion center staffed by one professional nurse (where an average of 25 patients/day are treated) and several inpatient units, including the 22 bed Hospital Para los Niños (children's hospital).

Hospital San Felipe is also a public hospital that serves as the national referral center for all serious oncology cases. It is a 200 bed hospital with four surgical oncologists on staff, one full-time and one part-time medical oncologist, and no pediatric oncologists. A full residency program has been developed in surgical oncology. There is no medical oncology residency program at this time. The training curriculum includes an extensive focus on biology, diagnostic skills, pathology, imaging, staging and overview of different therapeutic approaches. There are no trained gynecological oncologists although OB-GYNs are trained in basic cancer detection and care. The radiation oncology unit is the most advanced in the country and sees over 800 new patients each year. The pathology department is basic but employs 5-6 pathologists who have been trained in H&E as well as several histochemistry techniques. There is no hemato-pathology training. There is a 13 chair outpatient chemotherapy infusion center that treats an average of 20-25 patients/day. This center is typically staffed with two or three professional nurses. There are also two inpatient wards, one for women and one for men.

The **Cancer Center Emma Callejas** is a private, not-for-profit organization that employs one medical oncologist, one radiation oncologist, and one pathologist. Surgery is performed by a general surgeon and OB-GYNs provide all gynecological oncology care. Both the laboratory and radiology departments are basic but functioning. The Center has a preliminary cancer registry; however, there is no mechanism in place for sharing the registry with other hospitals. The hospital has a biochemistry and microbiology laboratory. It offers no palliative care services. There is a definite need for training in cyto-technology.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Honduras gained independence from Spain in 1821. One of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America, nearly two-thirds of the 7.3 million Hondurans live in poverty. Health care for the urban and rural poor is extremely limited with over 20% of the population not having access to any health care.

EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES: Volunteers are encouraged to bring their personal computer for lectures/presentations. An LCD projector is available for presentations. In addition, volunteers participating in clinics should bring lab coats and stethoscopes. Prior to their assignments, volunteers are in e-mail contact with the local personnel to discuss additional material to bring and/or medical donations, if appropriate. Please do not bring medications which do not adhere to WHO guidelines.

HOUSING: Volunteers stay at local hotels in Tegucigalpa. Further information provided to volunteers during planning stage. It is strongly recommended that all members of a team stay at the same hotel. Note: volunteers are responsible for the cost of their accommodation.

ATTENTION: In many cases, an accompanying spouse, companion or family member (age 18 and older) is interested in participating in a volunteer capacity. In general, HVO is able to facilitate such assignments, especially for those with health care training. However, it would be up to the individual to be pro-active in developing a volunteer assignment. Many times, a role for these volunteers is not defined until after arrival at the site.

In order for an assignment to be under the auspices of HVO, a spouse, companion or family member will be required to become a member of HVO and sign a release form prior to their assignment.

Site Suitable for Spouse/Companion?

☒ YES ☐ NO

Site Suitable for Children?

☐ YES ☒ NO

LANGUAGE: The official language is Spanish. While Spanish language abilities would be helpful, they are not required. Many of the students and several of the faculty speak English, and translation is available for any lectures.

PASSPORT & VISAS: A passport valid for six months after the date of return and a visa are required. A visa is not required for **those traveling on a U.S. passport**, but travelers must provide evidence of a return ticket or onward travel. For more information, contact the Embassy of Honduras at 3007 Tilden Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008. Tel: 202-966-7702) Web-site: <http://tinyurl.com/yev9h5a>

REGISTRATION WITH US EMBASSY: Volunteers should register with the US Embassy before their assignment. The US Embassy in Tegucigalpa is located on Avenida La Paz, tele (011 – 540) 236-9320 or (011-540) 238-5114 or fax at (011 – 540) 236-9037. Another option is to enroll in the Dept of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program before you depart – see “Practical Information for Your Trip.”

CLOTHING/CLIMATE: Honduras is hot and humid almost year-round. Temperatures vary by altitude rather than season. The average high temperature nationwide is 32°C (90°F) and the average low is 20°C (68°F). Temperatures are coolest in mountain areas. The Caribbean coast can experience a lot of rain, the heaviest being from September to February. In Tegucigalpa, the capital, the climate remains more temperate and the dry season takes place from December to May. The capital can get chilly between December and January when the temperature in the city hovers around 23°C (73°F).

Volunteers are expected to dress in a professional manner while fulfilling their assignment duties at the project site. Professional attire does not include shorts, short skirts, sleeveless tops, flip flops or other casual attire not appropriate in a professional setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The CDC recommends that visitors traveling to Honduras take an appropriate antimalarial drug regimen. For additional information on vaccines and health information, visit CDC’s website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinationHonduras.aspx>.

ORIENTATION MATERIALS: All volunteers have access to the *HVO KnowNET*, where the majority of the essential orientation materials are stored. The *HVO KnowNET* - linked at the top of the [HVO website](#) - contains a variety of useful background materials including: how to obtain a visa; hints and suggestions from previous volunteers to a site; copies of volunteer talks/ lectures;

curriculum information; trip reports from previous volunteers, etc. To receive access to the *HVO KnowNET*, contact HVO Member Services at membership@hvousa.org.

NOTE: The International Development and Education Award (IDEA) provides support for early-career oncologists in low- and middle-income countries by establishing strong relationships with leading ASCO members who serve as scientific mentors to each recipient. Recipients of this award will attend ASCO's Annual Meeting and participate in a post-Meeting visit to their mentor's institution in the U.S. or Canada. Recipients will also receive 3 years of complimentary membership with ASCO, including a subscription to the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

There are currently [185 IDEA alumni](#) from over 40 countries. On average, each IDEA alumnus shares the information and new skills they learned with 50 colleagues in his/her country.

There is a separate award for those involved in palliative care. The requirements and benefits of this Award are similar to those of the IDEA program, except that participants in the IDEA-PC program will be matched with ASCO mentors who specialize in palliative care, and eligible candidates must have a demonstrated interest in integrating palliative and supportive care services in their current institution.

Please keep this program in mind for the future as you are in contact with physicians from the countries in which you volunteer. Consider encouraging them to apply for the award.

HVO MEMBERSHIP: All volunteers with confirmed assignments must be members of HVO. The costs associated with developing a meaningful volunteer opportunity, as well as recruiting, briefing and placing a volunteer exceed \$900. Dues help defray these costs and provide essential funding for HVO ensuring that we will be able to continue placing volunteers – today, tomorrow and next year. Dues are \$150 for physicians and dentists; \$70 for nurses and allied health professionals; and \$40 for those in training. To join, visit our secure web site (<https://hvousa.org/ways-to-give/>) or call the HVO office.

For more information about HVO projects, visit our web site at www.hvousa.org
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