

## Global Health – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Clerkship Description

**Title of Clerkship:** Global Health – Ethiopia Student Clerkship

**Clerkship Site:** Addis Ababa University School of Medicine and Black Lion Hospital and Education Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Rotation Type:** Emergency Medicine  
Internal Medicine/Infectious Diseases  
General Surgery  
Pediatrics  
Obstetrics/Gynecology

**Length of Clerkship:** Four weeks with longer rotations possible.

**Department(s):** Emergency Medicine

**Number of students per block:** 2-4

**UT Faculty:** Kris Brickman, M.D.

**International Faculty:** Dawit Desalegne, M.D., Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies (Supervisor for all medical student rotations)

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Alex Belay, Local Transportation Coordinator, e-mail: [alex.belay71@gmail.com](mailto:alex.belay71@gmail.com) or [alexbz71@yahoo.com](mailto:alexbz71@yahoo.com), Telephone (251-911)24 44 42

Sister Yalemwork, additional local contact for housing and transportation, e-mail: [addisbnb@ethionet.et](mailto:addisbnb@ethionet.et), phone: (251-911)45 66 62.

Melia Sesay, Education Coordinator, Black Lion Hospital

**Housing:** Currently plans are underway to convert a student housing area to an international student and resident housing facility which is located on the hospital campus. If this facility is unavailable there are numerous other dormitory like facilities within walking distance of Black Lion Hospital which could be used as international student housing. Facilities will include bedrooms, shower and typical bathroom facilities. Housing will also be in a restricted access area on or near the hospital campus that will assure appropriate security.

**Transportation:** Addis Ababa is the third largest city in Africa with somewhat disorganized highway and road layout making it quite confusing. Needless to say students will not be permitted to drive while on this Global Health rotation. Transportation can be arranged through local taxis at a very low rate. Typically \$1-2 will get you virtually anywhere throughout Addis Ababa. All taxis are blue vehicles with white tops and are found through the city without any difficulty whatsoever. There is no metro/subway system in the city. There is also bus transportation that are essentially large vans that commonly are transporting 3x the capacity that should be transported, therefore I would suggest these be avoided and stick with the taxis. In addition to this, and my highest recommendation is to arrange for transportation with one of the local contacts such as Alex Belay, a local contact who we have worked with in Addis Ababa to serve as a facilitator for orientation and transportation in an around the city and for arranging cultural experiences throughout the surrounding area and country. Alex will be a resource that will be available to you 24 hours per day for any issues or concern that may come up and for arranging local and regional transportation for cultural events outside the city.

**Language Communications:** The native language of Ethiopia is Amharic. However English is spoken everywhere throughout the hospital and also by most citizens throughout the city and country in general. Approximately 70% of the population is fluent in English and virtually all hospital workers speak English. All educational classes including medical school are taught in English; therefore I do not anticipate any language barriers to your rotation in Ethiopia.

**Food:** Food can be provided by hospital resources or the students may wish to pursue meals on their own. Dining throughout Ethiopia is very inexpensive and rarely cost more than a few dollars for lunch and probably less than \$5 for a fairly extravagant dinner.

Ethiopian dining is an adventure not to be missed. Don't look around for silverware or chopsticks – you won't need them. In traditional Ethiopian dining dinner is a ritual that starts with hand washing at the table followed by dinner consisting of their primary staple, injera, which is a crepe like thin bread material that you use to scoop up foods with your hands. This can be anything from salad to vegetables to meat products that are primarily in a stew like form. A hard boiled egg is commonly included in this stew. Upon completion of dinner there is another round of hand washing. You may then choose to engage in a coffee ceremony where coffee is roasted at your table and then ground and brewed in front of you. Don't forget to try the local honey wine or one of the local beers, both of which will likely set you back \$0.35 – \$0.40.

Speaking of coffee. Are you aware that coffee originated in Ethiopia? The story goes – an Ethiopian goat herder was thought to be the first to discover the mythical properties of coffee. He was so amazed at the dancing of his goats after they had eaten some berries from a nearby shrub that he decided to try some of these stimulating “cherries” for himself. The stimulating affect that they produced lead him to share his discovery with the local monks. Coffee quickly evolved into a ceremonial, religious drink keeping the monks awake during their long hours of prayer. The coffee in Ethiopia is quite strong – so you have been warned! But, it is truly outstanding if you are a coffee connoisseur. This is felt to be due to the distinctive high mountain locations where it is grown throughout Ethiopia. Ethiopia is one of the few countries where you will not find the ubiquitous Starbucks everywhere you turn. Surprisingly though there are many coffee shops throughout Ethiopia and Addis Ababa with one well known chain called Kaldi that surprisingly have the same sign, layout and design of the Starbucks.

A visit to Addis Ababa would never be complete with a trip to Mercato. This is the local market stated by many to be the largest in Africa. This market spreads over many blocks in Addis Ababa. There is nothing that you can imagine that cannot be found at this market. Everything from food items to clothing, house wares and building supplies, etc. can be found at this market and at incredibly low prices. Bargaining is expected but not to the extent that you will typically find in China. Although any violent crime in Ethiopia is extremely rare, pick pocketing is prevalent particularly at the market and I would advise you to not bring anything of value, do not wear any jewelry and keep your wallet at home. Carry cash in your pocket and don't be distracted so much by this incredible environment so as to not notice someone reaching into your pocket.

If you notice that you are getting a little out of breath while walking around Addis Ababa, this is for a good reason. Addis Ababa is the third highest capital city in the world at over 8000 ft. It actually sits in a valley below surrounding mountains that obviously are much higher but can be easily reached for a day trip with a driver or the death-defying taxis. It is this altitude that also explains why many of the finest long distance runners in the world are from Ethiopia. Halle Gallebese is a national hero who is a three time Olympic champion in 1500 meter running. I believe Ethiopia must be the only country in the world where the number one national sport is long distance running. Another sport that is very popular though and you will commonly find in and around Addis Ababa and other areas of Ethiopia is football, which is our brand of soccer.

Addis Ababa is a relatively new city, a little over 100 years old. It was created when the Queen of Ethiopia came down from their mountain village which was the Emperor's home and provided an easy fortress to defend from any attacks from surrounding enemies. Apparently the Queen, who had severe arthritis, went down from her mountain-top home to the hot springs in the valley and miraculously had her arthritis resolved by sitting in the hot springs. Therefore the Emperor's home was then moved to the valley which then became the present day Addis Ababa in the late 1800's. These hot springs still are a not-to-be-missed event for anyone who spends time in Addis Ababa where you can sit and enjoy the same hot springs that the Queen enjoyed and follow this with a relaxing massage, all for around \$10.

Like many African and Asian third-world countries, prostitution can be prevalent. Keep in mind that prostitutes will likely not be easy to identify since this is a common form of employment for poor Ethiopian women and they will likely be well dressed, attractive and most likely, HIV positive. Buying drinks for an Ethiopian woman who you do not know in one of the local bars or nightclubs is an invitation for problems. Over 50% of the Ethiopian prostitutes are HIV positive so please avoid putting yourself in a situation that might later become a problem.

While we are on this topic, another item that you need to be aware of is the fact that Ethiopia is intolerant of homosexuality. As a matter of fact, it is illegal; therefore there should never be any public display of affection among men although it is very common to see Ethiopian women holding hands as a display of friendship.

From a religious aspect, Ethiopia is very deeply ingrained into Christian Orthodox religion. The majority of Ethiopians attend church daily but their religious belief is a very personal relationship. Men and women worship separately with men on one side of the church and women on the other during services, even using separate entrances. Due to the close proximity to the Middle East, there is also a relatively large Muslim presence in Addis Ababa and surrounding areas of Ethiopia.

A trip to Ethiopia should also include some time to see some of the stunning scenic beauty outside of Addis Ababa. There are numerous waterfalls, lakes and various mountain locations throughout Ethiopia that are incredibly beautiful. There are also wildlife safaris in the southern part of Ethiopia that can be arranged for 2-3 days.

**Foreign Medical and Travel Insurance:** You will need to have medical insurance prior to leaving for your foreign destination. This medical insurance will be arranged through CMI (<http://www.studyabroadinsurance.com>) or ISI (<http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com>) and you will need to complete an application for this. The cost for a four week rotation will be approximately \$50. This insurance will cover any acute medical care, transportation costs and repatriation back to the U.S. Keep in mind that most of these experiences will be in academic medical centers that can clearly provide any minor care that would not warrant the use of this medical insurance. Needless to say, in the event of any illness, you must notify the Office of Global Health immediately so that we can provide any assistance necessary in managing any medical issues. In the event that you have insurance through your parents that covers any and all of these international activities, it will be required for you to provide proof of this insurance to preclude accessing the above mentioned insurance policy.

No separate liability insurance will be required for your rotation abroad. Your medical student liability coverage will be sufficient to cover your academic responsibilities.

**Program Costs:** This will be determined at the time of your rotation. The majority of the costs will consist of your flight to and from Addis Ababa. Housing costs depending on location are expected to range from \$500-\$1000 for the month.

**Pre Trip Requirements:** Immunizations and malaria prophylaxis will be required for any rotation in Ethiopia with my recommendation of Malrenote taken two days prior to arrival in Ethiopia and to continue this once daily throughout your rotation and continue for one week after your return to the US. Other immunizations required are Yellow Fever, Typhoid, HepA and Tetanus prophylaxis. Students will be required to bring their stethoscope and white coat.

US citizens require valid passport and Ethiopian visa. Visas can be arranged upon arrival at the Bolae International Airport prior to checking through immigration. Travelers to Ethiopia and neighboring African countries should ensure that the validity of their passports is at least six months beyond the end of their intended stay, and that their passport contains sufficient blank pages for visas and immigration stamps. Travelers may obtain the latest information on visas as well as any additional details regarding entry requirements from the Embassy of Ethiopia. White coat and stethoscope. Medical insurance. Any personal prescription medication necessary.

**Student risk/potential problems:** Travel to any foreign country has its inherent risks that must be considered prior to leaving the US. On these elective rotations, as opposed to traveling with a missionary group, you will not have faculty escorts on this academic adventure. Prior to your departure, safety and security concerns have been addressed to the best of our ability but you will still be functioning independently and anytime you venture outside of the academic and hospital environment, you must be aware of risks that may be compounded by a language barrier. This in no way should detour you from exploring the cultural and recreational activities that each foreign location provides for you but you simply must be cautious and somewhat strategic in how you explore and participate in this foreign landscape.

Specifically, although crime such as theft, sexual assault, etc. has not been a problem in any of our academic locations, students should take appropriate precautions. Women particularly should not venture outside of the campus/housing area alone after dark. Groups of 2 or more regardless of gender should be safe in this environment. I would strongly encourage all students to not invite problems such as spending late nights in local bars, wearing provocative clothing, engaging in excessive alcohol consumption or more significantly any illegal drug use. These activities will invite problems and I will assure you that you will find it, and there will be little that we can do to assist you particularly if you break their laws. Drug laws especially in foreign countries can be much more problematic than the US and not only could jeopardize your medical career but very likely will jeopardize your own freedom.

In essence, all students must use common sense at all times. Resources that you are normally accustomed to in the US may not be readily available. There will be an international coordinator/liaison who will always be available 24/7 for you to contact if you have any problems. Alex Belay will be your first contact person outside of the hospital environment for any issues or problems that may arise while you are in Addis Ababa. Alex is a local businessman with a Master's Degree who has agreed to oversee

and coordinate any and all activities outside of the hospital for our students. For any problems that might occur, you are to immediately notify the Global Health Office here at the University of Toledo. Be sure to [register with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate online](#), by phone, email, fax or in person. Registration helps consular staff contact you if necessary and allows you to receive situation updates.

As far as illness and injury, I would expect most of these issues to be handled at least initially at the hospital where you are completing your rotations. You need to immediately notify the international coordinator on site there as well as the Office of Global Health of any healthcare issues that arise and further ongoing management including potential transportation back to the US will be coordinated through the University of Toledo and the international institution.

### **Cultural Activities:**

- 2 days safari in southern Ethiopia
- Visit church containing “Ark of the Covenant”
- Explore ancient churches throughout Addis Ababa
- Visit national museum of Ethiopia that previously has contained “lucy”, the oldest hominid, over 3.2 million years old
- Explore local markets – Mercato
- Experience Ethiopian dining
- Visit a coffee house and experience coffee ceremony

### **Discussion – Addis Ababa University School of Medicine & Black Lion Medical Center**

Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia, a country of 80,000,000 people. The population of Addis Ababa is approximately 3,000,000 and represents the third largest city in Africa. Clearly Ethiopia is a third world country but without question Addis Ababa University and the School of Medicine are the leading educators and the academic center for Ethiopia and one of the top academic institutions throughout Africa.

Addis Ababa is a somewhat chaotic city with a confusing road structure and often horrendous traffic problems. Therefore, getting from one place to the next is never simple in Ethiopia and if you are not dodging cars, you are clearly dodging people. Traveling, even if it is in the back seat of a taxi is like a continuous game of chicken between the pedestrians and the vehicles of Addis Ababa. In fact, drivers of Ethiopia have been placed into two categories, those who have hit a pedestrian and those who will hit a pedestrian eventually. Be warned; if you are pedestrian please be more vigilant than the standard Ethiopian. And, if you are in the back of a taxi, my suggestion is to just sit back and enjoy the entertainment – but close your eyes if necessary.

Ethiopia is also referred to as the “cradle of humanity.” The oldest intact hominid, “lucy” was discovered in Ethiopia and has been dated to over 3.2 million years ago. For hundreds of years Ethiopia served as an intellectual and economic power of Africa. In fact, Ethiopia functions on a different calendar than the rest of the world – that is seven years and five months beyond the world calendar based on their differing beliefs of the birth of Christ. Scientific research subsequently appears to support the Ethiopian dates for the actual birth of Christ but, needless to say, obviously too late to change the world calendars. Therefore whenever you see a calendar with dates in Ethiopia, you will have the typical world calendar with then a second date in smaller print next to it that is seven plus years behind.