

December 5, 2011

Staff who engage in foreign travel for the Lab.

Please be advised, JLab Occupational Medicine provides Travel Medicine support services using the following procedure:

1. The Foreign Travel Management System (FTMS) automatically notifies Occupational Medicine of the employee's upcoming travel. This notification typically occurs one week to six months prior to the scheduled travel.
2. Occupational Medicine sends an email advising the traveler to visit the linked Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travel Medicine web site. This site is tailored to the lay public and lists CDC medical recommendations for the specific country to which the employee will travel.
3. It is the employee's responsibility to review the CDC recommendations and then contact Occupational Medicine for requested advice and assistance, such as vaccine administration. For many reasons, it would be infeasible for Occupational Medicine to reverse this logistic by first instructing the employee about medical specifics such as which vaccines to receive. Instead, we must provide information and then respect the employee's decisions.

This approach introduces the following challenges:

1. Many employees do not read the CDC recommendations.
2. Some employees do read the recommendations, but do so too late for medical action to be taken. For instance, the CDC recommends that travelers to certain countries be vaccinated against typhoid. The typhoid vaccine is expensive, has a short shelf life, and is not requested by most travelers, even when the CDC recommends it for their destination. Because of these factors, Occupational Medicine does not routinely stock the typhoid vaccine. Instead, we order it upon request. This does not allow enough time for some late requests.
3. Some employees do read the recommendations soon after they are advised to do so, but the travel was listed in FTMS too late to allow certain vaccines to be administered. For instance, the CDC recommends that travelers to certain countries receive vaccination against hepatitis A and/or B. In order to be maximally effective, these vaccines need to be started six months prior to travel.

Given these considerations, travelers should visit the following CDC Travel Medicine site as far in advance of travel as possible: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

After the employee has reviewed the CDC recommendations, she or he should contact JoAnne Newman, Occupational Health Nurse, for questions and requested service such as vaccine administration. JoAnne can be reached at 5585 or jnewman@jlab.org.

Thank you for considering this information. Please let me know if you would like more information about the Lab's Travel Medicine program.

Smitty Chandler
Director, Occupational Medicine