

Planning a Medical Mission Trip to Belize

Before Planning a Medical Mission Trip to Belize, contact Rev. Henry Baizar, Executive Secretary/Treasurer of the Baptist Association of Belize at 011-501-227-1654 (Office) or Belizebap@btl.net.

1. Plans should be made a minimum of a year in advance. If this is a first trip to Belize, someone needs to visit Belize to make contacts and determine the areas of need well in advance (even a year in advance!).
2. Appropriate sites for the medical clinics need to be selected. Henry Baizar with the Association is very helpful in targeting teams to the most needed areas. Many teams partner with local churches to provide the clinics in their church buildings, bringing a Gospel witness on behalf of the local church and the Baptist association as well as your team and church. Also, the Ministry of Health suggests returning to the same locations on a regular basis so to provide some sense of systemic medical care to the people.
3. Health Care Professional credentials and pictures must be submitted to the Belize government at least six months in advance for approval. These documents should say “license” and show the current date. These are needed for all medical professionals (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, dentists, etc.)
4. Someone must visit the District Medical Officer and obtain a letter inviting the medical team to hold clinics in that district. The letter must be submitted to the Belize national government for approval.
5. Soliciting pharmaceuticals for the trip is a big job that must begin a year in advance. Drug companies are not as generous as in the past and their samples are often not as needed as some more basic medications. Therefore, the majority of the meds must be purchased. Groups like MAP International (www.map.org) or Blessings International (www.blessing.org) will provide meds at a substantial discount to mission teams, but there is a detailed application process. Also, sometimes medications can be purchased in Belize at comparable prices to the states. Anna Smith at Lopez pharmacy in Belmopan (011-501-822-0231) and Brodies Wholesale in Belize City (011-501-227-7070 ask for wholesale pharmacy) can be very helpful in this capacity. Brodies can deliver the medications to their Belmopan store, where it can be picked up after your team arrives.
6. A drug manifest must be submitted to the Belize Ministry of Finance to receive an exemption from import duty. This must be done at least 3 months in advance. It must be a detailed manifest including expiration dates on all meds. Even with the letter of exemption, some taxes may still be charged. The group must be prepared to pay up to several hundred dollars.
7. The medical team needs to obtain all the necessary forms from the government so to fill out an individual form for each patient while the clinics are being held. At the end of the trip, the completed forms must be filed with the District Medical Officer plus a final summary and evaluation of the medical clinics.
8. Someone will need to promote the clinics in the locations where they will be held several days in advance. Some local congregations can do this well if given flyers. However, many congregations do not spread the word effectively. Therefore, a lead team is recommended to travel to Belize several days before the full team arrives to make all the final arrangements. These persons can pass out flyers and plan with local leaders. They may also need to purchase additional supplies in Belize.
9. An ideal medical clinic utilizes a host of support people beyond the doctors: several people for registration, one nurse for every two or three doctors, a pharmacist and one or two assistants, and others for overall support and general crowd control. In locations where medical care is rare and/or poverty is high, crowds of 200-300 can gather to receive care!
10. Commonly treated illnesses in Belize are heart disease, diabetes, fungal infections, asthma, scabies, parasites, backaches, headaches, and gastro-intestinal infections.

These instructions are from Scott Hagaman at First Baptist of Marion. His church has been on numerous medical mission trips to Belize. You can contact Scott at (828)652-6030 or scott@fbcmarion.org.