

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS

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We read with interest the article by Rebecca Reisch outlining ethics issues for stakeholders in international service learning programs and providing interim recommendations for the responsible conduct of such activities.¹ Reisch's interim recommendations suggest what can be done before, during and after an international learning trip to mitigate burdens and optimize benefits for the various stakeholders in training programs. To build upon a similar framework that we advanced in 2008 regarding ethical issues raised by burgeoning global health training programs,² we created the Working Group on Ethics Guidelines in Global Health Training (WEIGHT), which is comprised of members with expertise in global health and ethics from different geographic

regions of the globe. In December 2010, WEIGHT published formal ethics and best practice guidelines for training experiences in global health.³ These include guidelines for sending and host institutions, trainees and sponsors. To help raise awareness of the issues addressed in the WEIGHT guidelines, web-based modules are currently being developed and should be freely available later this year at <http://www.ethicsandglobalhealth.org/>. As with any guideline, we anticipate revisions and improvements as experience with using them grows. WEIGHT encourages efforts to develop and implement a means of assessing the potential benefits and harms of global health training programs in order to identify areas for further attention.

¹ R.A. Reisch. International Service Learning Programs: Ethical Issues and Recommendations. *Dev World Bioeth* 2011; 11: 93–98.

² J.A. Crump & J. Sugarman. Ethical Considerations for Short Term Experiences by Trainees in Global Health. *JAMA* 2008; 300: 1456–1458.

³ J.A. Crump, J. Sugarman & the Working Group on Ethics Guidelines for Global Health Training (WEIGHT). Ethics and Best Practice Guidelines for Training Experiences in Global Health. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 2010; 83: 1178–1182.