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Travel Medicine Online
International sources of travel medicine information on the Internet

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Summary Access to global information through the Internet has become an essential ingredient to successful practice in travel medicine. Internet sites that may be useful to travel health practitioners include those that represent international organisations (eg. http://www.who.int), national and international professional bodies (eg. http://www.istm.org), national public health and disease control centres (eg. http://www.cdc.gov). These useful sites often include online journals, geographic epidemiological information, regular outbreak alerts and news and downloadable information sheets for travellers, as well as those providing official guidelines and policies in travel medicine. It is also useful to have access to search engines, which can search the literature as well as the Internet.

Introduction
Access to global information through the Internet has become a virtual prerequisite for the practice of travel medicine. An enormous amount of information has been posted to the Internet or World Wide Web (WWW or simply the ’web’). It is important to target official and professional sites, which provide reasonably accurate and up-to-date information. The information may assist in developing an information portfolio that will empower the practitioner to better target the health advice and interventions that they provide for the traveler. Some sites also have useful information that the practitioner can provide to the traveler, such as fact sheets. In this report, an annotated list of selected official and professional international websites is provided, together with a small selection of other national websites that may be of value as a starting point for the travel health practitioner.

Websites reviewed
International Society of Travel Medicine
http://www.istm.org

World Health Organization http://www.who.int

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers http://www.iamat.org

ProMed-mail http://promedmail.org

PubMed http://www.pubmed.gov

The Cochrane Collaboration http://www.cochrane.org
International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM)
http://www.istm.org

For the travel health practitioner, the website of the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) is a useful starting point (see Fig. 1). With more than 1800 members in over 50 countries, it is a very large professional network of doctors, nurses and other professionals working in travel medicine, together with a number of useful initiatives for the travel health practitioner. It has a links page to a small number of other websites, including a number of North American sites reflecting a major source of its membership. A number of features and benefits are available only to ISTM members.

Important features are links to:

- Various ISTM endorsed conferences, including their biennial global meeting
- Information on the ISTM Certificate of Knowledge examination
- A Directory of Travel Health Providers
- The Journal of Travel Medicine
- Summary of disease outbreak news from various sources
- Several institutions offering courses and training in travel medicine
- GeoSentinal, a collaborative ISTM initiative for surveillance and monitoring of global trends in travel-related diseases
- ISTM Listserv-TravelMed

ISTM Journal of Travel Medicine
http://www.istm.org

Published by BC Decker, the Journal of Travel Medicine is an indexed journal dedicated to travel and migrant medicine. It was first published in 1994 and is now its 10th year of publication. This journal publishes editorials, reviews, original research, book reviews and notes from the recent literature. Abstracts are available on line to January 2001. Thereafter, there is a link to BC Decker to the full text of the journal for a limited period.

ISTM Listserv-TravelMed
http://www.istm.org

For ISTM members, this is a useful electronic means of regularly interacting with other ISTM members around the World via email. Although it is
stated to be an unmoderated discussion group, it can be a useful network to source information as well as practical solutions to problems faced in travel medicine. Subscription as an ISTM member is a prerequisite for participation. For full-time and other actively involved travel health practitioners, it is probably useful to belong to an email-based discussion group.

World Health Organization (WHO)

http://www.who.int

The World Health Organization (WHO) website is probably the leading source of international health information and publications (see Fig. 2). It is a very large site and has some useful disease prevalence and distribution information, as well as some of the latest developments in areas such as drug resistance. There is also a very useful link on the home page dealing with the latest news on disease outbreaks and it is possible to look through archived news as well. While not all information is directly relevant to travel medicine, it does have a link to a dedicated site for travel medicine.

WHO International Travel and Health
http://www.who.int/ith/index.html

For many years, the WHO has published guidelines for travel health titled International Travel and Health. In recent years, these have been annually updated and more recently they have also been available on the Internet (see Fig. 3). Previously referred as the ‘yellow’ book by the color of its cover, it is the ‘blue’ book, reflecting a change in the color of its cover. This publication is a useful adjunct to national guidelines on travel health, where these are available. It has a very useful country-by-country guide, which includes basic information such as the capitol city, elevation, vaccination requirements with special reference to yellow fever vaccination, and the general situation with respect to malaria. A useful editorial on the development of these guidelines is given elsewhere.

WHO Weekly Epidemiological Record
http://www.who.int/wer

The Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER) is an indexed public health journal, which is published weekly. It provided for rapid dissemination of 'epidemiological information on cases and outbreaks of diseases under the International Health Regulations and on other communicable diseases of public health importance,
including the newly emerging or re-emerging infections’ (see Fig. 4).

WHO Bulletin of the World Health Organization
http://www.who.int/bulletin/en/

The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* is an indexed public health journal, which has become available online in recent years. It covers various topical public health and policy issues. Archives are available online back to 1996.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, USA

http://www.cdc.gov

Although not primarily an international website, it is an official site of the US Government frequently linked from many other official sites around the world. Like the WHO, the CDC has a very large website and is also a leading source of international health information and publications. It has some useful disease prevalence and distribution information. There is also a very useful link on the home page dealing with the latest news on disease outbreaks and it is possible to look through some archived news as well. There is a very useful A–Z section, which includes fact sheets on various diseases. While not all information is directly relevant to travel medicine, it does have a link to a dedicated site for travel medicine.

CDC Travelers Health
http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm

For many years, the CDC has published guidelines on travel health titled Health Information for International Travel. In recent years, these have been updated biannually and more recently have become available online (see Fig. 5). These guidelines are referred to now as the yellow book, reflecting the color of its cover. It is a comprehensive book of guidelines on travel health for the USA. Some special features include ‘build custom report’ feature, which allows the compilation of travel health information from the guidelines database on yellow fever vaccine requirements, malaria, and potential health risks. This could be very useful information globally, if the information is managed in the context of national guidelines for travel health for various countries.

CDC Cruise Ships and Air Travel
http://www.cdc.gov/travel/cruiships.htm

An interesting section of the travelers health website is the section on cruise ships and air travel. The cruise ship section includes sanitation inspections for all cruise ships berthing in the USA. The air travel section also provides useful links to topical issues such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/

Figure 5 Homepage of Travelers’ Health (Reproduced with permission of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention).
The *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* is an indexed public health journal, which is published weekly. Like the *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, it focuses on disease outbreaks and health concerns, but with a special emphasis on the USA. There have been some very useful reviews of travelers’ health related issues.

**CDC Emerging Infectious Diseases**

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/

*Emerging Infectious Diseases* is a peer-reviewed and indexed public health journal, which is published monthly. It aims to track and analyze disease trends with a view to providing information on emerging infectious diseases. Established in 1995, all issues of the journal are available online.

**International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT)**

http://www.iamat.org/

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT), a well known not for profit organization, was founded in 1960 and maintains a network of travel health practitioners and clinics globally. Individual travelers can also join IAMAT. It has a number of resources of disease and geographical medicine issues available at its website, but some benefits are limited to members (see Fig. 6).

**International Society for Infectious Diseases**

Promed-mail

http://www.promedmail.org/

This is another useful networking and listserv resource and information source on emerging infectious disease. It is available in several languages. Participation in this email based discussion group is by subscription. A useful review of other national and international organizational websites has been published elsewhere.

**Literature searches/sources**

PubMed, National Library of Medicine, USA

http://www.pubmed.gov

This is a literature search engine for all journals indexed by PubMed. It can be a useful means of finding published literature on travel medicine subjects. Abstracts are available for most recent journal articles and links are provided where

*Figure 6*  Homepage of the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (Reproduced with permission of IAMAT).
available to online journals. Many of these online journals require subscription.

The Cochrane Collaboration
http://www.cochrane.org

The Cochrane Collaboration published and indexed systematic reviews on various healthcare interventions. A number of these relate to travel medicine. Abstracts are available online. In some countries, the full text may also be available online.

Elsevier’s, Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease
http://intl.elsevierhealth.com/journals/tmid/

Elsevier commenced publication of a new peer-reviewed journal, Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease, which is currently indexed on Science Direct. The full text of the first issue is currently available as complimentary through ScienceDirect.

Other sites

Some other national sites with useful travel medicine and/or communicable disease outbreak information include:

Population and Public Health Branch, Canada
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/

International Health, Department of Health (DoH), England
http://www.doh.gov.uk/international/index.htm

Eurosurveillance, European Union
http://www.eurosurveillance.org/

Travel health practitioners should also contact their local health departments and travel health societies and networks for links to local travel health guidelines and resources. It should also be noted that site addresses change from time to time.

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