

Allied Health: Barriers and Opportunities in Missions

A scenic view of a river in Hoi An, Vietnam. The river is calm and reflects the surrounding environment. On the left bank, there are traditional yellow buildings with dark roofs, some with balconies. On the right bank, there are many small wooden boats, some with colorful decorations, and palm trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Caroline Mrowiec, OTR/L



Introduction

- Graduated from Midwestern University in IL with MOT in 2016
- Practiced in Waco, TX for 2 years before moving overseas
- Volunteered with Orphan Voice for nearly 3 years to start a free, pediatric therapy center in Vietnam
- Currently completing an OT fellowship program in neurology at Memorial Hermann
- Who are you? Audience poll time!



Objectives

- To address barriers healthcare students or professionals face
- To provide an understanding of the mission organizations and opportunities in need of allied health professionals
- To give a picture of what mission work as a therapist can look like



Why Go?

- What draws you to doing a medical mission vs. any other type of mission?
- What do you have to offer as an allied health professional?
- We have a unique opportunity as allied health professionals
 - Positions open to otherwise closed countries
 - Capacity for longer relationships than primary care
- But... Only a small percentage of professionals actually go on medical missions



What does a modern missionary look like?

A person wearing a blue helmet and a green shirt is riding a bicycle on a dirt road. The background shows a rural landscape with green fields and hills. Overlaid on the image are several black oval callout boxes with white text, arranged in a circular pattern around the person. The text in the boxes lists various concerns and challenges.

Safety/health concerns

Loans

Lack of mission experience

Commitment issues

Leaving family, job, familiarity

Lack of a team

Lack of professional experience

Fundraising

Is it God's will?

Lisa

No debt
10 years experience
Sending organization fundraised
Language training
Long term commitment
Went on a STM to Peru first before deciding to move there indefinitely (3 years to actually move there)
Lives in a city
Therapy services provided through a church, shift in focus over time, Free Wheelchair Mission
Able to openly share faith, therapy clinic was in a church

Caroline

Student debt
2 years experience
Connected directly with the local organization
Fundraised (not fully funded before I left)
No language training
Two-year commitment with opportunity to extend
Never been on a mission trip before, never been to Vietnam before
Lived in a city
Focus on training locals to turn the center over
Not allowed to openly share faith at work



<https://therapyforperu.weebly.com>

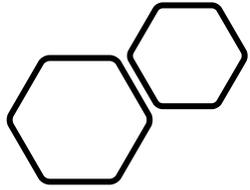
<https://www.cleverandlisa.com>





<https://voicesofhopebook.com>





Loans

- Lisa waited to pay off loans, sold condo
- My situation (and maybe yours too!)
- Resources:
 - MedSend
 - Allied health applications are considered
 - Must be with an approved organization
 - Must be licensed in the US
 - 4-year commitment (will consider as short as 2 years)
 - Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
 - CMDA scholarships
 - Paid opportunities
 - Other GMHC presentations



PSLF PROGRAM	VS.	NON-PSLF PROGRAM
Government, 501(c)(3) organizations, and some non-tax exempt non-profits.	EMPLOYER	Any Employer
Direct Loans	LOANS	Direct Loans
Income-driven plans including PAYE, REPAYE, IBR, ICR	REPAYMENT PLANS	Income-driven plans including PAYE, REPAYE, IBR, ICR
10 years or after 120 qualified payments have been made.	TIME	20 to 25 years depending on the repayment plan.
Yes	TAX FREE?	Any amount forgiven will be taxable as income.

 For more information on your student loan options, please visit: usstudentloancenter.org



Perspectives™

Lack of Mission
Experience

- Vision trips (ex. SIM)
- STM (Lisa)
- Courses to prep (ex. Perspectives)
- My experience

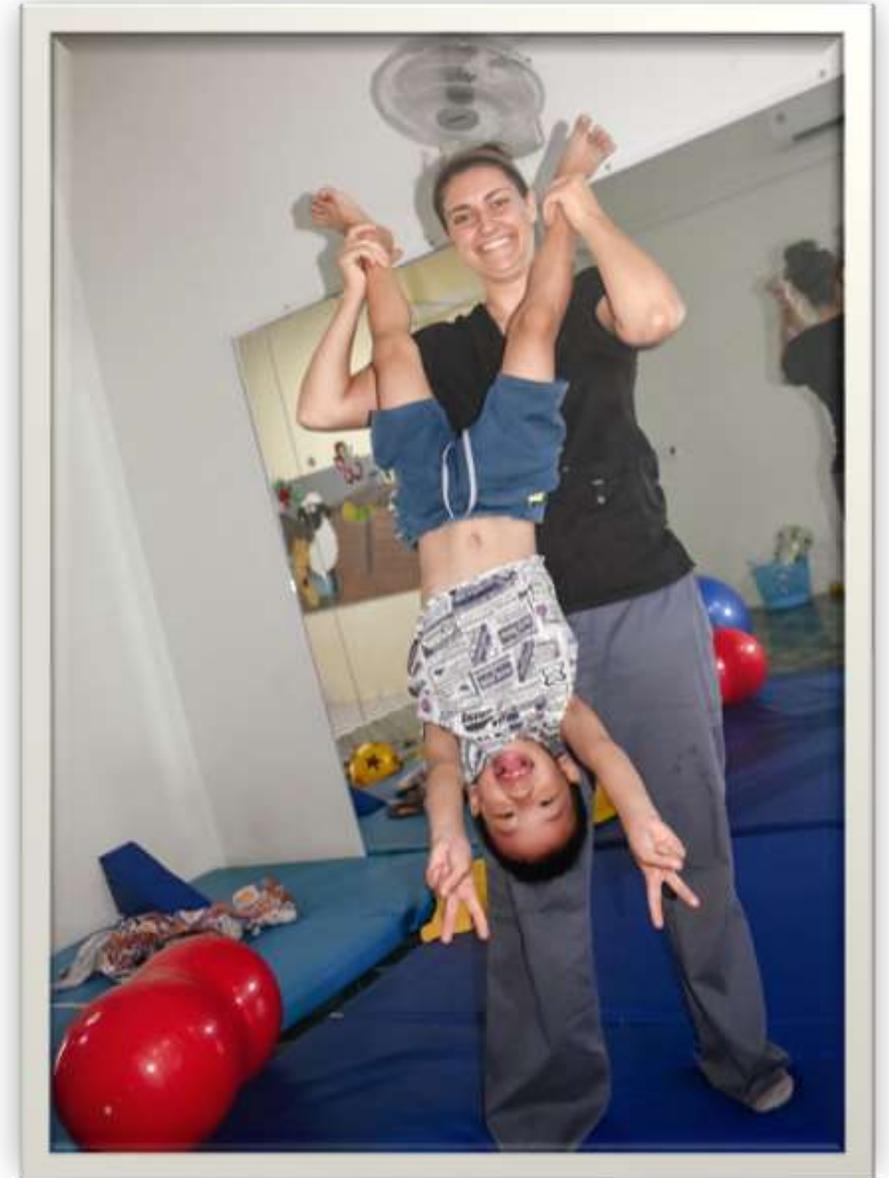


Lack of a Team

- Most positions will have a team
- Mentors provided virtually
- Team aspects outside of healthcare
- My experience

Lack of Professional Experience

- Requirements for professional experience (usually 1-2 years)
- Mentors
- Working with a team
- Continuing ed online
- Connecting with other medical missionaries
- Follow blogs/mission updates



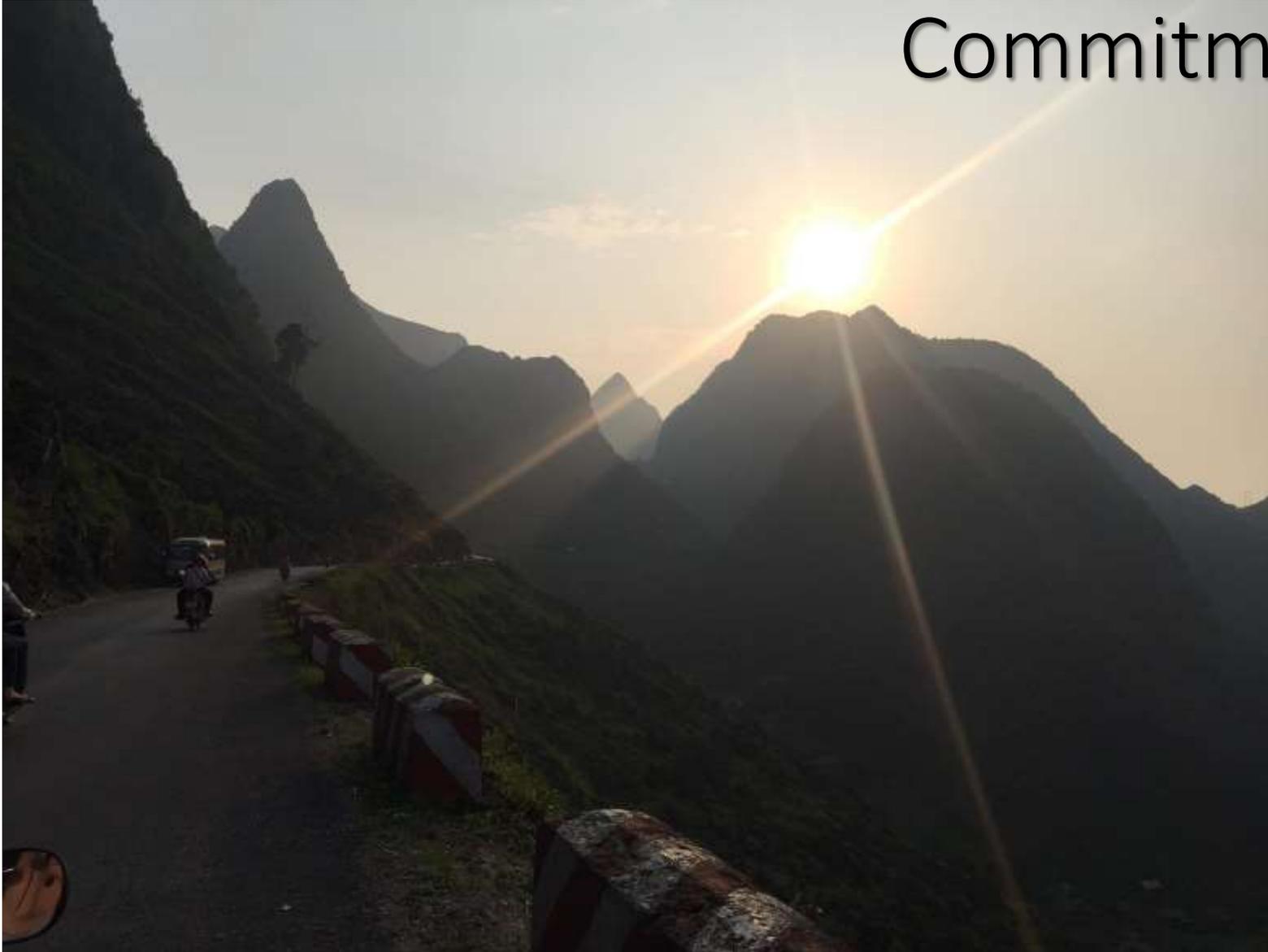
Fundraising

- Paid positions for LTM
- Org specific resources and coaching
- Ask your church
- My experience



Commitment Issues

- The changing landscape of LTM
- Market place workers
- Flexibility is important
- My experience





Leaving Family/Friends

- Options for shorter commitments
- Budgeted trips home
- Modern technology
- Chance for friends/family to visit you! (may be a big draw for therapist friends)
- New communities
- My experience

Safety/Health Concerns

- Country specific
- Area specific
 - Safety where you live and work
- Smart Traveler Enrollment Program



Guess the Gangster!



VS.



Source: "Global Peace Index 2021." Institute for Economics & Peace, June 2021.

Guess the Gangster!



VS.



Guess the Gangster!



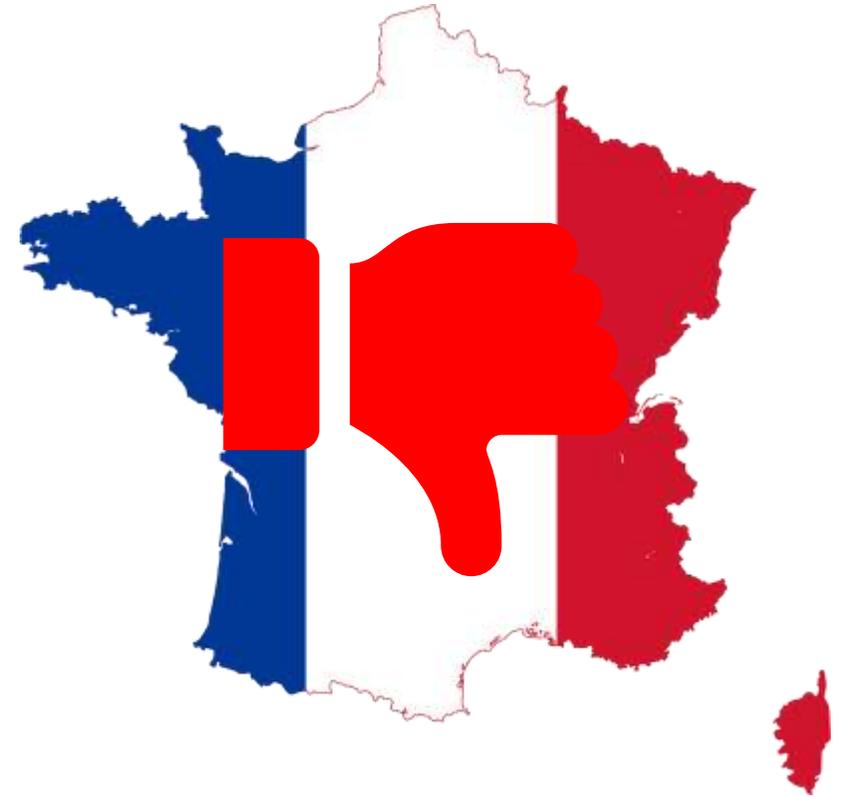
VS.



Guess the Gangster!



VS.



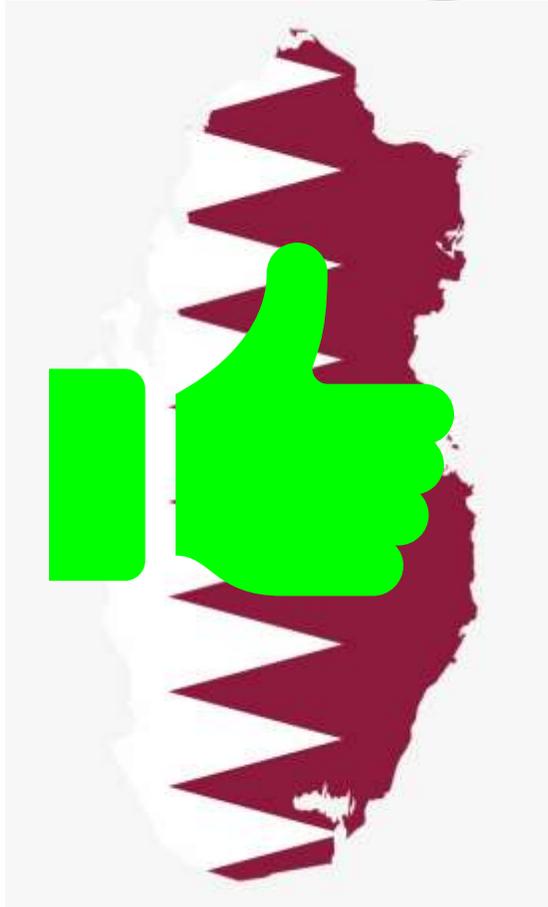
Guess the Gangster!



VS.



Guess the Gangster!



VS.



Safety/Health

- Lifestyle
 - Transportation
 - Faith in a closed country
- Health
 - Medical care: dentist, doctor, labor and delivery, pharmacies
 - travel health insurance
 - Travel clinic
 - Health concerns for that area
- Women
 - Sexual harassment
 - self-defense class
 - may be more of a target as a foreigner
 - Try to blend in with the local culture
- COVID: <https://www.kayak.com/travel-restrictions>



God's Will?

- My experience
- Prayerful consideration
- 1 Kings 19:11-13 NIV
- 1 Samuel 15:22 NIV





Examining My Motives

- Would I be content if God called me to stay at my current job forever?
- Do I believe I can only serve God fully overseas?
- Am I open to being called to stay long term?
- Am I trying to escape problems?
- What am I hoping to gain?
- What are my expectations?
- What does success and or failure look like if I accept this mission?
- Am I seeking personal fulfillment?
- Am I unhappy in my current job?
- What excites me about doing a medical mission?
- What does my spiritual life look like?
- Have I considered fasting, praying, seeking wisdom from a pastor or mentor?

What I Learned about God's Call

- Hindsight of God's direction for my life
- Serving as a part in the body of Christ
- Understanding my resources in a new way
- Sovereignty and stewardship





WORLD WATCH LIST

2019

Opportunities

The Persecution of Christians



The 50 countries where it is most dangerous to follow Jesus:

- | | | | | |
|---------------|------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 North Korea | 11 Syria | 21 Central African Republic | 31 Jordan | 41 Russian Federation |
| 2 Afghanistan | 12 Nigeria | 22 Algeria | 32 Nepal | 42 Malaysia |
| 3 Somalia | 13 Iraq | 23 Turkmenistan | 33 Bhutan | 43 Kuwait |



Opportunity Types

Student

Educator

Mentor

Volunteer

Market place
worker

Create
opportunity



Features of Allied Health Opportunities

- Low-, middle-, and high-income countries: where are the placements?
- Closed vs. open countries
 - Lisa: open country, primary focus was church activities
 - Caroline: closed country, primary focus was therapy
- Paid vs. unpaid
- Experience
- Length of mission
- Support in position
- Language requirement

	Mercy Ships	OMF	Interserve	CMDA	Scatter Global	Orphan Voice
Mission Length	2 weeks-2+ yrs	STM=1 yr or less LTM=1+ yrs Teaching opportunities, limited for students	STM=2mon-2yrs LTM=2+ yrs	Students, teaching opportunities, STM and LTM	Usually 1-2 yr contracts, option of extending	STM= inquire with your interest LTM=1 yr minimum
Countries Served	West Africa	Southeast Asia	Asia and other countries	All over, majority in Africa and Asia	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, US, Vietnam	Vietnam
Experience Required	2 yr minimum	Position dependent, 2 yrs for some, more experience for teaching positions	Position dependent, may only need a license	Usually no significant experience required	Usually 2 yrs, sometimes up to 5 yrs	STM= position dependent LTM= 3 yrs (due to visa requirement)
Language Requirement	English	Position-dependent, some have language training, some use a translator	STM= no language requirement LTM= language training	Position-dependent, some have language training, some use a translator	Usually English is only required language	English, interpreter provided
Funding	Self-funded	Mix of paid and self-funded positions	Mix of paid and self-funded positions	Mix of paid and self-funded positions	Almost all positions are paid	Stipend position



Faith-Sharing on Mission



FAITH IS THE HEART
OF THE MISSION



THERAPY: A MEANS
TO AN END

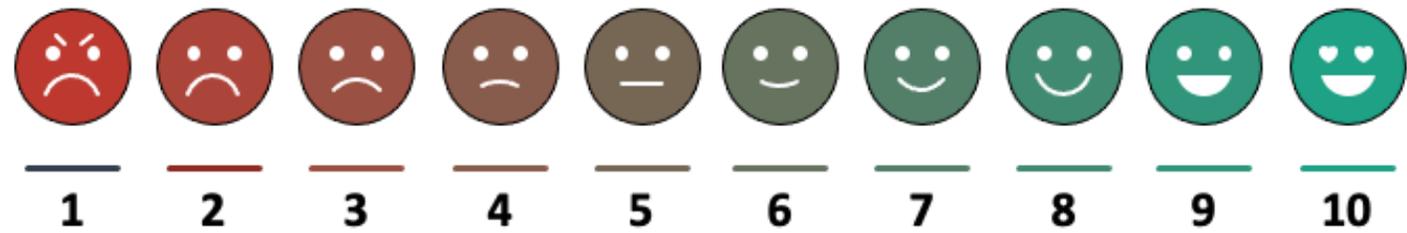


BEING INTENTIONAL



MULTIDIRECTIONAL
IMPACT ON OTHERS

What Next?



- On a scale of 1-10, what is your level of interest in being involved in medical missions?
- What is one step you are going to take to explore your interest after this conference?



Resources

- See handout for complete list of resources on the Medical Missions website
- Join the Allied Health group under Medical Missions community (pending approval)
- Contact me at cmmrowiec@gmail.com



Questions?