



CONSTANZA

— MEDICAL MISSION —



VOLUNTEER GUIDE



WELCOME

Our Mission Statement:

“We support the poor in Constanza, Dominican Republic through our Catholic-based collaborative efforts to improve health and access to clean water.”

On behalf of the Constanza Medical Mission Board, I want to welcome you and thank you for volunteering for the upcoming Medical Mission trip. Whether this is your first trip or a return trip, you will be changed by this experience. As a member of the team you will uniquely experience another culture, and the way you think about your own culture. The people of Constanza are full of faith, joy and a certainty that things will always get better...and they need our help. This is what drove my father, the late Deacon Joseph Vitello, to form the Constanza Medical Mission in 2005. You will see the impact the Mission has on people’s lives while we are there, as well as the impact our support of the local Clinic and the Nuns have for the weeks we are not there. For our Medical volunteers, you will hone your skills by treating hundreds of patients in need of care. For support volunteers, you will help to ensure we operate efficiently in each of the clinics we provide. Enjoy the experience and the team of people you will be working with.



Deacon Joseph Vitello

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul J. Vitello".

Paul J. Vitello
President, Constanza Medical
Mission



HISTORY OF THE CONSTANZA MEDICAL MISSION

The Constanza Medical Mission was founded in 2005 after Deacon Joe Vitello of St. Jerome Parish in North Weymouth, MA, traveled to the Dominican Republic at the urging of his Diaconate classmate and friend, Deacon Bill Kane. Bill had formed a mission in the town of Cevicos, north of Constanza, in 2000. Joe was touched by the poverty and inadequate healthcare and knew he had to do something. With the help and support of Father Tom Wyndham and the parishioners of St. Jerome Parish, Joe visited the Dominican Republic and recognized that Constanza and the surrounding communities were in dire need of improved medical services. He invited American health care providers to join him on trips to help the people. The Mission has been blessed by two committed Medical Directors, Dr. David Rudolph and Dr. Mark Samuelson, and by a strong Board including past President Glenn Manke and his wife Margi.



Joe Vitello, Dr. Saif and Bill Kane

Our Catholic-based Mission has three primary activities in Constanza; support for the Sisters of Tireo, medical support and providing clean water to the people.



Sor Juana Colon

First, the financial support we provide for the Sisters in Tireo, a part of Constanza, allows the Sisters to in turn help the people most in need. They do exceptional work and Joe's notes from his first meeting with the nuns in 2005 are still accurate: "They live simply, humbly, joyfully helping all who need it most. Our dollars and help are critical."

Second is medical care through the medical missions and more importantly, the funding of a Clinic in Tireo with a full-time doctor and medical equipment to provide daily preventive and urgent care to the people of Constanza.

Dr. Saif Haidar has been committed to caring for the people of Constanza for nearly 15 years.



Doctor Saif Haidar



The third area we target is providing the people with clean water distributing ceramic pot water filters through an initiative with Wine To Water. There is no reason for any person, especially the children, to be sickened by contaminated water. This form of illness is preventable and providing access to filters for clean water is an important step in eliminating this problem.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE MISSION

Our goals are to deliver primary care to the residents of Constanza and surrounding villages, to provide well-care visits that promote a culture of preventative medicine, and to make referrals to Dr. Saif and other medical professionals in the Constanza Hospital, and facilities in the capital city of Santo Domingo.

The “work unit” consists of an MD/NP/PA, a Nurse, and translator working as a treatment team. This unit will work together during the day at the Clinics and restock supplies at night for the next Clinic.

The focus of the work unit is to work efficiently and see as many patients as possible without sacrificing quality. Keep notes that will provide a history of the visit and treatment. But there is no billing, so keep them minimal. Teach each other and interact with the other work unit(s) if there is confusion, an interesting case, etc.

LOCATION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic is located in the Caribbean Sea, on an island called Hispaniola; Haiti occupies the western section. In 1492 Christopher Columbus landed on what he named Hispaniola, or “Little Spain”, and established the first permanent European settlement in the “New World”. The Spanish and French maintained colonies on Hispaniola for centuries. Their influence waned in the early 1800s, and the Dominican Republic declared independence in 1844 and maintained its independence except for a short Spanish occupation from 1861 to 1865 and occupation by the United States from 1916 to 1924.



Constanza

Since the country's independence in 1844, they have had 38 constitutions which is more than any country. The constitution also establishes the system of governance as a unitary, democratic republic. The most recent Constitution was adopted in 2010. It separates powers into three branches.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE LEAVING ON THE MISSION

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO GO ON A MISSION?

The cost of the trip is \$1,200 which includes travel, food, and lodging. Please send a check made out to **Constanza Medical Mission, Inc.** to:
Constanza Medical Mission
c/o Joanne Tully
117 Forest Street
Whitman, MA 02382.



This is tax deductible; \$600 is due no later than 6 weeks before departure and the remaining \$600 is due prior to departure.

DO I HAVE TO SPEAK SPANISH?

No, although it's certainly a great advantage. We will have interpreters on the trip, so it is possible to go without knowing the language. However, we strongly recommend you learn some Spanish before the trip. Knowing even a little can make a difference when working with patients.

WHERE CAN I LEARN SPANISH?

For those in the Boston area, BASE offers programs ranging from four to twelve courses depending on the intensity: four Intensive courses, seven Semi-intensive courses, or twelve Weekly courses.

See: <http://www.spanishclassesboston.com/>

You can also use online programs like <http://www.practicingspanish.com/justalist.html> or the Free App **duolingo** <https://www.duolingo.com/course/es/en/Learn-Spanish-Online>

For book lovers: *An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers: Communication and Culture*, Fourth Edition, ISBN: 9780300212976, by Robert O. Chase and Clarisa B. Medina de Chase (Yale University Press) is a terrific book written by two health care workers, one of them Dominican-American, that includes online audio and video resources. yalebooks.com/medicals spanish

DO I HAVE TO BE IN GOOD PHYSICAL SHAPE?

This is a somewhat demanding work experience. You will find that there is some lifting, climbing in and out of vehicles, and walking over various types of terrain, as well as working 8-12-hour days. Please include any physical limitations in your VOLUNTEER CONTACT AND INFORMATION FORM. This one-page form is required and is to be sent to Katy Foley per the instructions on the form.

DO I NEED A PASSPORT FOR THIS TRIP?

Yes. Non-U.S. citizens must also have current documents, and some will need a special visa from the Dominican Consulate in Boston. PRHDR will need a copy of the photo page of your passport.



HOW DO I GET A PASSPORT?

For the most up-to-date information as well as all the appropriate forms, visit the U.S. Department of State's website at <https://passports.state.gov/>. If you are applying for a passport for the first time, you'll need to appear in person at a passport processing center, typically a post office or courthouse (you can search for them by zip code at the State Department website). You'll have to bring a photograph of yourself that meets passport requirements; you can have it taken at places like a Fed Ex Office, Wal-Mart, or even some post offices for a nominal fee. You'll also need to bring proof of U.S. citizenship, such as an original birth certificate, not a photocopy, and a valid form of photo identification, such as a driver's license. Fees vary but it will cost approximately \$150 and take four to six weeks for the application to be processed. Expedited service is available, but you'll pay about \$60 extra plus the cost of shipping.

WHAT IMMUNIZATIONS DO I NEED?

Follow recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>

That means that you must be up-to-date on the following:

- Diphtheria-tetanus (with pertussis if booster is due)
- Typhoid (either oral live vaccine or killed injectable vaccine)
- Hepatitis A (the USM Campus Health Centers offer an inexpensive vaccine)
- Hepatitis B (series of three with new option if departure is soon)
- Malaria prophylaxis is recommended and should be considered based on CDC recommendations. DEET insect repellent and cover-up clothing can reduce your exposure. For more information, read the CDC's advisories for travelers at www.cdc.gov/travel/. You should allow at least 4-6 weeks if possible to complete the required immunizations.
- Travelan is an over the counter dietary supplement specifically designed to reduce the risk of Travelers' diarrhea due to infection by E.coli and other bacteria. One pill is taken before each meal. It is also available on Amazon.
- Ask your doctor about Polio and MMR (if you had this as a child long ago, a booster may be recommended)

PACKING

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

The short answer is "not nearly as much as you might think". The lighter you pack, the more comfortable you will be traveling and the more medical supplies you can carry when you board the plane. As noted later in the list of what to bring, you might also want to pack your bags with the idea that you'll leave behind some items when you leave, such as clothing or shoes that are in good shape, toiletries, bug spray, and unopened snack foods. Anything we leave behind is gratefully accepted by the Convent or possibly the Peace Corps volunteers who serve as our interpreters. You'll need suitable clothes for working in the clinics (more on the dress code to follow).

WHAT SHOULD I BRING? (CONT.)

The Mission will supply water, breakfast, energy bars for lunch, and dinner.

General Supplies- previous groups have brought soaps, small toys, clothing, baseball caps, balls, etc. Together, these supplies have filled about 4 or 5 fifty-pound duffle bags and this is a “red-flag” at Customs. In addition, they are difficult and costly to transport although we attempt to have the fees waived for these bags and have been intermittently successful.



Please bring the following:

- Passport (also suggest bringing a copy in your carry-on luggage; not in a your checked bag)
- Place a sheet of paper in your luggage with the Convent’s address written on it:
Convento Hermanas Misioneras del Corazón de Jesús
Calle José Durán #25
Tireo, Constanza
Tel. 809 690 1098
- Copy of your Health Insurance Card
- Personal medications
- Money for gifts, tips, and alcohol. While you can exchange US \$ for Dominican pesos in the DR, it is recommended that you bring some pesos with you. Check with your bank, AAA or Travelex in your area. The current exchange rate is about 50 Dominican Pesos = \$1 US.
- Medical equipment (stethoscopes, BP cuffs, otoscopes, lights, if available)
- Clothing (Note that laundry facilities are not available)
 - scrubs (multiple pairs)
 - lightweight long pants
 - walking shoes/sneakers (a group usually gets up for a 6:00 a.m. walk each morning)
 - outfit suitable for Mass on Sunday (no shorts or sleeveless tops)
 - casual dress for dinner on Thursday night
 - toiletries including wipes
 - Lightweight jacket, sweater or sweatshirt for cool evenings/mornings
 - Pocket-size rain coat (optional), but it tends to rain in November!
 - Hat
- Earplugs (to help sleeping when roosters and neighbors are occasionally loud at night)
- Insect repellent (preferably w/DEET) for your skin – consider wipes
- Consider bringing a travel packet of Imodium antidiarrheal in the event you get ill. Consult with one of the Mission medical staff if this happens.
- Sunglasses if needed
- Sunscreen
- Clock with alarm if needed
- Flashlight with batteries
- Ziploc bags for personal use
- Small backpack to bring to the daily clinic with a jacket/sweater, snacks, other items for the day. Or bring a “fanny pack” to keep essentials (phone, cash, passport, etc.) close at all times.

- Personal snacks and/or some to share at debrief sessions each evening. Note that there is now a store (like a 7-11 or Cumberland Farms) right across the street from the Convent where you can purchase things. Some will bring a small jar of peanut butter and buy bread for sandwiches.
- *As an option, some volunteers will pack clothes/shoes that they wear while on the Mission, and then leave with Ramona at the Convent on the last day. They clean them and give to those in need.*
- Stickers, balls, colored pencils, markers for the children, but PLEASE NO CANDY due to considerable tooth decay in many of the people. (This is Optional - it's not possible to bring enough gifts for all the children you will see, but if you're feeling generous and would like to bring something, you're more than welcome. Anticipate between 20-30 children in a given community.

WHAT DO I NEED TO WORK IN THE CLINICS?

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS:

Wear Medical scrubs. For visibility, you want to stand out as a medical professional. Bringing your own stethoscope is optional. A head lamp is helpful for clinical assessments as well as getting around at night.

We will have supplies of examination gloves, Purell type alcohol sanitizer, and mosquito repellent.

Be sure to bring pens and a clipboard. Back pack. Personal snacks (optional).



NON- MEDICAL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

Clean, neat and preferably plain tops (limited writing/graphics).

Again, we want to show as professional volunteers supporting our medical professionals and showing respect for the clients with whom we will be interacting. Pants and capris are recommended for women, and pants are recommended for men. Back pack. Personal snacks (optional).

HOW MUCH LUGGAGE CAN I TAKE?

It varies by airline, but you can typically take an approved carry-on luggage that fits in the overhead bin and a personal item (backpack or bag/purse that fits under the seat). You may be assigned a checked bag with medical supplies or asked to place supplies in your personal bag if you have the space. This bag will weigh less than 50 pounds each, likely be a large duffel bag and will be supplied by the Mission. Details will be provided in a "Packing Meeting" prior to the trip. You should consider packing two days' worth of clothing in your carry-on bag (in case your luggage is delayed or lost), as well as any supplies or medications you may need. For the latest packing regulations, visit the Transportation Security Administration's website at www.tsa.gov.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

WHERE DO THE MEDICAL SUPPLIES COME FROM?

Due to issues encountered with Customs in the Dominican Republic, the majority of prescription medications are purchased by Dr. Saif in the Dominican Republic. You may request donations yearround from local churches, pharmacies, doctors' offices, and hospitals. You may also request cash donations from organizations and members of your community. Supplies can be given to any Constanza Medical Mission Board Member and grouped for shipment to the Convent during the year. Other supplies can go in volunteer's luggage. At the Packing Meeting we will organize supplies so that everyone will have a fairly equal amount to take with them. Please do not accept any medications that will expire before you travel.



WHAT MEDICATIONS ARE MOST NEEDED?

Generally speaking these are needed OTC and prescription drugs:

Over the Counter (OTC)	
Acetaminophen drops 30ml	Lansoprazole 15mg (Prilosec)
Acetaminophen 80mg tablets	Loperimide 2mg (Imodium)
Acetaminophen elixir 120ml	Ranitidine 150mg (Zantac)
Ibuprofen Syrup 120ml	Hydrocortisone 1% cream 30gm
Ibuprofen 200mg	Antibiotic ointment 30 gm
Adult Multivitamins	Prenatal Vitamins
Children's Multivitamins	Eye Drops (Visine or equiv.)
Prescription (typically purchased by Dr. Saif in the D.R.)	
Albendazole 400mg Syrup	Albendazole 400mg tablets
Amoxicillin 125mg/5ml 100ml	Amoxicillin 250mg
Azithromycin 250mg	Cephalexin 250mg
Ciprofloxacin 250mg	Doxycycline 100mg
Bactrim DS	Cortisporin otic solution 10ml
Loratidine 10mg	Permethin 5% cream 30 gm
Metronidazole 500mg	Erythromycin eye ointment
Clotrimazole or Miconazole 1% cream 30gm	Clotrimazole or Miconazole 2% vaginal cream

AT LAST, **CONSTANZA**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARRIVE AT THE AIRPORT?

We fly into Santiago. Next we collect luggage and pass through Customs. You will complete an application for entry into the country. When asked to list your reason for entering the country, mark "Pleasure." Everyone helps to move all of the baggage, and you will be responsible for your own luggage, including any other bag assigned to you. We will pack the luggage into the pickup truck from the Convent and all volunteers will ride in an 8-passenger van from the Convent and another rented 12 passenger van. It is about a 2 hour ride to Constanza/Tireo. Roads are bumpy and mountainous on the latter part of the ride.

WHAT WILL WE TYPICALLY EAT?

All dinners are provided by excellent cooks in the Convent. Breakfast is provided by the Hotel Constanza. The food is delicious, well-prepared, and safe. It is highly recommended that you only consume food provided by the Hotel or the Convent or Sor Juana. We will provide bottled water. You can purchase other beverages at local shops. Lunch is not provided at the medical clinics, but we are bringing protein bars. If you want to buy bread and bring a jar of peanut butter to make a sandwich each day, please do so.



WHERE IS THE CONVENT AND IS THERE A PHONE NUMBER TO CALL?

The address and telephone number for the convent in Tireo is:

Convento Hermanas Misioneras del Corazón de Jesús
Calle José Durán #25
Tireo, Constanza
Tel. 809 690 1098



WILL I HAVE A ROOMMATE?

We book individual rooms at the hotel, unless requested for a shared room, and a suite is booked for the Peace Corps volunteers. That said, please be flexible should we ever run into a situation of overbooked rooms where you may have to share a room for some or all of the trip. Unlikely, but never out of the question!



CAN I TAKE A SHOWER?

Yes. The water pressure is pretty good most of the time, although it occasionally can become low. In the past hot water was a luxury, but that has vastly improved. **REMEMBER TO NEVER DRINK THE WATER UNLESS IT COMES OUT OF A SEALED WATER BOTTLE.** THIS INCLUDES LIMITING THE AMOUNT OF WATER THAT GETS IN YOUR MOUTH OR EYES WHEN SHOWERING OR WHEN BRUSHING YOUR TEETH (use bottled water).



THE CLINICS

WHAT WILL I DO AT THE CLINIC?

Remember: We are the clinic. We will convert a school or a church into a clinic for the day. Note that this can be a very confusing time, and it is best for individuals act under the direction of the coordinator.

Volunteers and Peace Corp worker(s) will take the patient's history and complete the Patient Intake Form. If enough Nurses are available, a Nurse will triage patients; perform a physical assessment, review medications, findings and will then consult with a PA, NP or Physician about the course of action. After meeting with the doctor, the patients will be given any meds and any instructions on ongoing care. Volunteers may be asked to assist. **NO MEDICATION** can be given out before consulting with the nurse practitioner or physician.



When an eye care professional, Optometrist or Ophthalmologist is participating in the Mission, a translator and sometimes a volunteer will be assigned to assist in the eye exam and dispensing of glasses.



The same is true when a Dentist or Dental Hygienist participates in a Mission. A translator and/or volunteer will assist as needed.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE?

We work long days, so first and foremost be prepared for the next day by the night before. Have your backpack, personal items and supplies ready to go.

The Mission Leader will let all know the night before where the next days Clinic will be held and what time we will depart. Best to be early!

- 6:00 a.m.: An optional group walk to get the day going.
7:00 – 7:30a.m.: Breakfast in the hotel.
7:30 - 8:00 a.m.: Load supplies into truck and vans and head to clinic site.
By 8:30 a.m. Arrive at the clinic site and take 20-30 minutes to set up Clinic before seeing any patients.
9:00a.m. - 4:00 p.m.: See patients.
4:00 – 5:00 p.m. Break down clinic.
5:00-5:30 p.m. Return to Convent.
5:30-6:30 p.m. Dinner at the Convent.
7:30 p.m. Return to Hotel for daily debrief, lessons learned and instructions for the next day's Clinic



PHOTOS OF CLINICS



WHAT CAN I DO IN MY FREE TIME?

We will have a group dinner on the last night (Thursday) at a local restaurant.

You will be tired after the long days, but there will be time to relax at the Hotel. Please limit drinking to social times. Smoking should be minimal and not near any building or home. It should go without saying, but the use of substances, marijuana, or drugs is illegal and forbidden. These policies must be followed for the good of the Mission and out of respect for the people we come to serve.

HOW MUCH MONEY WILL I NEED?

All of your transportation, lodging and meals are paid for with your \$1,200 donation. If you wish to purchase supplies at the store or gifts for loved ones, and for the tips we provide to our drivers, Peace Corp workers or hotel staff, we suggest bringing at least \$100-150. We do not recommend that you use ATM cards or credit cards until you check with Dr. Saif, Sor Juana or the Mission Coordinator. As previously noted under "What Should I Bring", you can exchange US \$ for Dominican pesos in the U.S. Check with your bank, AAA or Travelex in your area.



HOW IS THE WEATHER?



The climate in Constanza is warm, humid, and partly cloudy. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from 53°F to 78°F and is rarely below 49°F or above 82°F. In May, daily high temperatures are 75-80°F, and daily low temperatures are between 55-60°F.

In November, daily high temperatures are 70-75°F, and daily low temperatures are between 50-55°F.

CAN I CALL HOME?

Generally speaking, yes. Some cell phone services do work well in the Constanza region, but calls can be expensive. Check with your cellular provider for International calling plans that you can initiate on the departure date and cancel upon your return.



VOLUNTEER QUOTES

“You will be inspired by their kindness, strength, and perseverance. You will overcome obstacles and become a member of an incredible team. I promise you – one week in Constanza will change the way you feel about health care . . . and yourself.”



Dr. David Rudolph, M.D., past Medical Director, Constanza Medical Mission

“I visited the mission in Constanza and I was struck by the joy that thrived amidst great poverty...I was shocked to see such an inadequate healthcare system; their hospital had no operating rooms and the clinics were in need of equipment and medicine. This has moved me into dedicating more resources towards addressing these critical medical needs through the CMM.”



Father John Carmichael, Spiritual Director, Constanza Medical Mission

“I have a beautiful office, state of the art technology and a wonderful team around me. I left it for one week this year to go to the Dominican Republic to “do dentistry”. Sound crazy? Not to me , as my philosophy in life is that if each person gives back, just a little, the world would be a better place.”

Dr. Robin Feltoon, D.M.D.



This Volunteer Guide is a living document. Please send any feedback or unanswered questions to Paul Vitello at veal62@gmail.com or call him at 941-525-8237.

Thank You
Gracias

