
Paediatric pre-travel care

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Over 6.2 million Canadians travelled internationally in 2005 with less than 10% seeking pre-travel advice. In addition, the destinations travellers are visiting are expanding beyond North America and European Union countries to include more exotic travel in Latin America and Asia. With timely pre-travel health advice, a significant proportion of diseases presenting post-travel can be prevented.

Information obtained by paediatricians during a pre-travel visit should include details on the destination, planned activities, and type of accommodations, as well as the patient's medical history, including vaccinations. In addition to assessing the need for additional vaccines, the paediatrician has an opportunity to review general preventative measures.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the pre-travel care provided by paediatricians in Canada, using a one-time CPSP survey. The paediatric pre-travel care survey was sent to 2,451 CPSP participants and 650 responses were received (27%). Among respondents, nearly 70% reported having referred patients for pre-travel care in the past 12 months. The referrals were primarily to travel health clinics (50%), followed by public health units (17%) and infectious disease specialists (6%). Of the 452 paediatricians who made referrals, 64% also provided pre-travel advice to their patients. Paediatricians, who described their practice as primary care, consultative general paediatrics, or a combination of both, accounted for 67% of referrals and 74% of pre-travel care reports. The care was provided most commonly in a community-based setting (68%). The most frequent travel destinations reported were Latin America and the Caribbean (67%), followed by Asia (20%) and Africa (5%).

This survey highlights the important role health care providers currently play in identifying and caring for high-risk travellers. Ongoing support to paediatricians for this important preventative role is important.

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