

# The Health of Host Communities: Part of Printed Travel Health Advice?

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## Background

Travel health advice is given in various ways and through various media.

Printed travel health advice (leaflets, booklets, brochures) has long been used to inform tourists of preventative behaviour minimizing health problems during and after their travels.

Some is customized by the travel health provider, some is produced by commercial bodies such as the pharmaceutical industry or travel goods producers, or given out by health authorities.

All are either to be distributed by the health professional or accessible to travellers for collection in clinics, surgeries, pharmacies and so on.

Traditionally, travel health advice is provided to protect the traveller.

Travel is a two-way process that includes the traveller as well as the host community.

Tourist behaviour not only affects their own health but, on location, can also impact on the health of local residents and communities in various ways.

Travel health advice, therefore, should embrace the well-being of the traveller **and** the host.

## Purpose of the study

To examine if printed travel health advice includes advice on considerate behaviour towards the hosts' well-being.

## Method

In 1999, the Travel Medicine NewsShare, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, published a call for contribution to the study. ISTM-members were invited to share printed travel health advice they routinely hand out to patients pre travel.

Only few members sent material promptly and generously.

After that, any brochure, leaflet or booklet, intended for use by travellers was collected wherever the opportunity arose.

After discarding material aimed only at health professionals, specific technical information on diseases or vaccinations, sales-linked information and the many multiple copies received, 44 printed items of travel health advice were eligible for content analysis in 2002.

No discrimination was made between good or poor material in terms of layout, design, content, quality, accurateness, timeliness, volume, user-friendliness and so on or indirect judgement of the producers of the material.

Four leaflets produced by non-health related providers aiming at promoting 'Responsible Tourism' were located and added later.



## Results

Sample (Publication date, where obtainable: 1996-2001)

Items	n	%
Book	1	2
Booklets	14	32
Leaflets	16	36
Information sheets	13	30
Total	44	100

Source of material

Origin of items	n	%
Travel health provider	18	41
Health Authority, commercial	26	59
Total	44	100

Countries	n
USA	15
Australia	12
Canada	8
Hong Kong	3
United Kingdom	2
South Africa	2
Germany	1
Italy	1
Total	44

Only one item mentioned the hosts by advising respect to local customs and law, none mentioned the hosts' health.

The four leaflets issued by non-health related sources under the umbrella of 'Responsible Tourism', were the only ones that not only focussed on the hosts, but three of them mentioned the hosts' health either indirectly (n = 2; problems with child sex tourism), or directly (n = 1; disposal of faecal matter, and local water protection).



## Discussion

The findings coincide with an earlier study on travel health advice, where none of the respondents (n = 106) received information on the consideration of hosts' health (Bauer 2002).

Tourists' impact on local health can be a) indirect, deriving from economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism, and b) direct, due to the transmission of diseases, accidents, and workplace health and safety violations (Bauer 1999).

Tourists cannot alleviate all forms of impact, but they can modify their behaviour in such a way that locals' health is not negatively impacted by the presence of tourists.

The three ways of disease transmission most easily influenced by tourists' considerate behaviour are the respiratory, faecal-oral and sexual transmission of microbes.

Respiratory infections can be minimised by avoiding openly sneezing or coughing at people in crowded areas such as in markets or on buses.

Traveller diarrhea often leads to tourists' indiscriminate defaecation with inappropriate disposal of faeces and toilet paper, and often unwashed hands due to the unavailability of water.

The transmission of STIs from the traveller to the host has been discussed elsewhere (Cabada et al. 2002, Forsythe et al. 1998).

Other tourism related health problems concern local tourism service providers and health and safety aspects of their work.

## Recommendations

The travelling public needs to be made aware of the role they could play in transmitting pathogens or in causing health problems in other ways.

The travelling public needs to be made aware of how they can contribute to minimizing negative health impacts.

Appropriate information should be included in printed travel health advice to allow tourists to become more considerate towards their hosts. This advice should include duty of care and responsibility in relation to local tourism employees and their working conditions, such as porters (Bauer 2003) or hospitality workers.

## References

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