

Medical Volunteers FAQ

Q: What kind of medical volunteers do you recruit?

A: We utilise medical volunteers in the following roles: anaesthetists/paediatric anaesthetists, operating theatre, recovery room and pre/post-operative nurses, paediatricians, surgeons (plastic, oral maxillofacial, and cleft), paediatric cardiologists, paediatric intensivists and neonatologists. We also accept certified child life specialists/hospital play specialists, speech and language therapists, and biomed technicians. Areas such as administration, clinics, OB, psychology and schools generally do not meet this criteria.

Q: Do you recruit dentists?

A: In recent years our demand for international dental volunteers has decreased significantly due to successful training initiatives for local dental volunteers across our programme countries. While it is a testament to our sustainable development strategy, unfortunately it does mean that we are currently unable to accept dental applications.

Q: Do you recruit operating department practitioners (ODPs)?

A: While ODPs play an important role in patient care in the United Kingdom, unfortunately licensing requirements from other countries preclude us from having ODPs in our programmes at this time.

Q: I am a retired anaesthetist and would like to go on a mission. Do you accept retirees?

A: Operation Smile adheres to Global Standards of Care and ensuring the safety of our volunteers and patients is of the utmost importance. Therefore we require our medical volunteers be active in their profession. We will accept retirees for up to two-years post retirement as long as the credentials are current and some form of education and applicable work (if only part-time) is continued.

Q: I am a registered nurse who used to work in the OT but have been a bariatric specialist for the past four years, would you accept me as a medical volunteer?

A: All of the medical specialties accepted are based upon clinical experience and education. Paediatric experience is required and our nurses must have experience working in a medical/surgical Unit, PICU, NICU, PACU, operating theatre, or A&E during the past two years.

Q: How do I become a volunteer?

A: Once you have completed a volunteer application form and included any supporting documentation, each application is reviewed by the UK Medical Sub-committee to ensure that we continue to provide the best clinical care possible to every patient. The application will then be sent to our headquarters office in the US to be approved and credentialed. If you have any questions at all prior to filling out an application, please feel free to contact our volunteers department at 020 3475 5126 or by email at volunteers@operationsmile.org.uk

Q: How long does it take to become credentialed?

A: Processing a new volunteer application can take between 8-12 weeks on average.

Q: How does the mission selection process work?

A: Our Volunteer Support Manager will be in touch with you via telephone and email to coordinate your availability with our mission needs. Please bear in mind that to be in compliance with Operation Smile's Global Standards of Care, mission teams must have a balance of new and experienced OS volunteers. This means that there may be fewer positions available in each specialty for new volunteers throughout the year, but we will do our best to get you on your first mission as soon as possible.

Once you have been confirmed to a mission, there are several packets of information sent to the volunteer providing all necessary details regarding the mission. There are also forms that must be read, signed and returned. Volunteers will be advised of the expectations well in advance.

Q: How much will it cost me to go on a mission as a medical volunteer?

A: There is a £300 team fee required of all medical volunteers for each mission attended. This team fee covers the volunteer's airfare, lodging, ground transportation (to/from the airport and to/from the hospital), and breakfast and lunch every day of the mission. Missions are usually 10 days long but may at times require additional travel time to get to/from the mission site. Volunteers are financially responsible for any costs incurred for visas, immunisations, checked baggage, dinners during the mission, and any other incidentals like phone/internet charges at the hotel, taxis, souvenirs, etc.

Q: I am currently a medical student and want to do an elective placement with Operation Smile, is that possible?

A: Unfortunately we do not have the means to facilitate elective placements. At the moment, we are only able to offer fellowships through our Resident Leadership Programme for trainees who are in their final year of study in plastic surgery, anaesthesia, or paediatrics.

Q: I am a currently a medical resident; will I qualify for missions?

A: If you are a resident in your final year of study of plastic and reconstructive surgery, anaesthesia, or paediatrics you may be eligible to apply for our Resident Leadership Programme. This programme allows residents to experience a mission under the supervision of a mentor.

Q: I am a student and am interested in going on a mission, how can I make this happen?

A: Students are a valuable part of many Operation Smile missions. For more information about becoming a student volunteer, please contact our Student Programmes Officer at 020 3475 5126 or by email at students@operationsmile.org.uk

Q: I do not fit under the category of medical volunteer, student or resident but would like to go on a mission. I am willing to pay to go. Is this possible?

A: Unfortunately we have extremely limited opportunities for non-medical volunteers to participate on a mission. However, our ability to assist patients around the world depends on the efforts of many volunteers and donors here at home who raise awareness and funds for Operation Smile. While we might not be able to place you on a mission team if you do not fit the criteria for credentialing, we can use your skills in other ways. If you would like to get involved as an advocate for Operation Smile within your community, please contact our fundraising team at 0203 475 5126 or email us at fundraising@operationsmile.org.uk