



Oncology Vietnam *Project Description*

GOAL: Assist in training physicians, surgeons, nurses, laboratory personnel and other health providers with the Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy (also known as Hue College of Medicine and Pharmacy) in the following areas:

1. Up-to-date advances in the clinical care of oncology patients on a wide variety of topics such as management of lung cancer, head and neck cancer, breast cancer and reconstruction, esophageal cancer, GI cancers, lymphoma, and cervical cancer.
2. Surgical training for breast cancer, esophageal cancer, gynecologic and pancreatic cancer.
3. Guidance in developing immunohistochemistry and flow cytometry technologies.
4. Training for physicians to provide palliative care.
5. Assistance in developing an infrastructure to deliver chemotherapy as an outpatient which would involve assistance in developing an infusion center and provide assistance in improving their current chemotherapy mixing station to be able to mix chemotherapy drugs safely.
6. Oncology lecture series to medical students and/or residents.
7. Training to nurses in the management of oncology patients.

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Please note: Potential volunteers should not contact Project Directors until they have submitted a CV, a Supplemental Volunteer Information form and contacted a recruiter at the Washington office.

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LENGTH OF ASSIGNMENT: 1 – 2 weeks

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS: Volunteers must be appropriately trained and credentialed medical professionals who specialize in oncology. This includes physicians (medical, radiation, gynecologic, and surgical oncology, among other specialists), laboratory professionals, pharmacists, and nurses. Volunteers need to have been in active practice for at least 5 years, be certified in their oncology specialty and provide HVO with a current CV, a copy of their current license and, for surgical volunteers, a list of which surgical procedures they currently are permitted to perform based on their current hospital credentials. Final year oncology fellows or those who have recently completed their fellowships will be accepted if paired with an experienced volunteer. Radiologists are also accepted as volunteers. The pathology group would welcome visits from anatomical pathologists to advise on cost efficient expansion of services.

PROJECT: Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy (HUMP), located in central Vietnam, is an academic center with a hospital run by the government. It provides health care for the 18 provinces in the central and highland areas of Vietnam serving a total population of more than 20 million. About 70 – 80% of the citizens have some form of insurance, either through private insurance or government supported insurance. It trains a variety of specialties including undergraduates, medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and medical technologists. For the past 50 years, more than 12,000 health professionals have been trained at this center. It has 600 beds and approximately 28 departments, one of which is the department of oncology. There are 30 residents per year and 2 oncology fellows each year. In all of Vietnam, there are 920 oncologists. The hospital also has 12 radiologists. Hue Central Hospital is a public hospital near HUMP's facility.

Oncology patients are cared for by a multidisciplinary team which includes medical oncologists and surgical oncologists. Approximately 70 beds are reserved for cancer patients. Surgical and medical oncology beds are separated from each other. There are no private rooms. The bulk of the patients at the hospital are indigent.

The facility sees about 120 – 130 new cancer cases per month. The majority of deaths occur due to the metastatic disease. The most prevalent cancers seen are lung, gastrointestinal (gastric, hepatoma, colorectal) breast, cervical, ovarian and lymphoma. The center has a rudimentary list of cancer patients treated with their respective diagnosis, but no formal cancer registry. The clinic is purely a solid-tumor clinic – they do not deal with leukemia, multiple myeloma, or any benign hematology. The center does all of its chemotherapy as an inpatient service although it would like to develop an infrastructure to deliver chemotherapy to outpatients. It has a rudimentary palliative cancer care

program. Because it does not have screening programs, a good number of patients present with advanced disease. Only about 10% of patients with advanced cancer and/or imminent death have some sort of in-home services. There are no hospice facilities. There is a small amount of blood bank support. Most of the medications on the WHO list of essential medicines are available.

Specialty training such as oncology or radiation is variable and offered in small programs and many programs are new. There is no accreditation for anything, and so re-certification does not exist. In essence, chemotherapy can be administered by general physician as well as surgeons. The typical age of graduating physicians is 24. If additional training is desired for subspecialty, it is usually 2 years, so the typical age of graduating medical oncologists is 26-27. The oncology department/clinic has one room reserved for staff workroom/medical records where all the trainees (pharmacists, medical and surgical residents, nurses) use. There is one room reserved for chemotherapy mixing room, and for lab draw and testing. They have one computer to print out various orders (chemotherapy, admission, and discharge). Medical records are kept by the patient, and some are stored at various places in the clinic.

The operating room is relatively modern and clean. The center has laboratory facilities on site with a 1 day turn-around time for lab results. For pathology results, the turn-around time is 3 – 5 days. The facility has about 200 microscopes and one multi-head scope.

Volunteers will provide training in a variety of ways including conducting ward rounds, surgical demonstrations, bedside training and didactic lectures. Volunteers may also have the opportunity to provide training at Hue Central Hospital, near to HUMP. Hue Central is a 1,000 bed facility that houses approximately 2,000 patients. They have a linear accelerator.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: See HVO “Vietnam General Information” document.

EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES: The center does not have a linear accelerator. The gamma-knife is their major work-horse. It has modern computers and software programs that would allow them to effectively deliver radiation to their patients. It has basic radiologic support such as X-rays and Ultrasounds. It also has CT and MRI scans although these need to be updated.

HOUSING: Available at local guest houses and hotels. Additional information will be provided.

ATTENTION: In many cases, an accompanying spouse, companion or family member (age 18 and older) is interested in participating in a volunteer capacity. In general, HVO is able to facilitate such assignments, especially for those with health care training. However, it would be up to the individual to be pro-active in developing a volunteer assignment. Many times, a role for these volunteers is not defined until after arrival at the site.

In order for an assignment to be under the auspices of HVO, a spouse, companion or family member will be required to become a member of HVO and sign a release form prior to their assignment.

Site Suitable for Spouse/Companion?

YES NO

Site Suitable for Children?

YES NO

LANGUAGE: Vietnamese is the official language. French and English are common second languages. French is common among older people, while English is more common among the

young and the well educated. Faculty at the hospital speak English.

PASSPORT & VISAS: Passports must be valid for at least six months past the end date of assignment. A business visa is required for Vietnam for volunteers staying at least one month, a tourist visa will suffice for anything less. If a business visa is required, volunteers have the option to apply directly to the Vietnam embassy on their own or else volunteers can choose to utilize HVO's visa service for an additional fee. Business visa applications should be submitted 4 – 6 months prior to a volunteer's assignment and absolutely no later than 2 months. Approved volunteers will be provided additional information outlining this process. Visa information applies to U.S. citizens.

REGISTRATION WITH US EMBASSY: Volunteers are encouraged to register with the local US Embassy. See the "Vietnam General Information" document for further details. Another option is to enroll in the Dept of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program before you depart – see "Practical Information for Your Trip."

CLOTHING/CLIMATE: Average temperatures in Hue are mid-80's to mid-90's all year long. Temperatures climb steadily and reach high temperatures from June through August (90's F). September through December is the rainy season.

Volunteers should wear their HVO name tag and short white coats. Bring 2 sets of scrubs and enough masks and caps to last your stay. Clothes should be lightweight and easily washable. Volunteers are expected to dress in a professional manner while fulfilling their assignment duties at the project site. Professional attire does not include shorts, short skirts, sleeveless tops, flip flops or other casual attire not appropriate in a professional setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Volunteers accepted for this project will be provided with additional information regarding housing, visas, travel, and other topics.

ORIENTATION MATERIALS: All volunteers have access to the *HVO KnowNET*, where the majority of the essential orientation materials are stored. The *HVO KnowNET* - linked at the top of the [HVO website](#) - contains a variety of useful background materials including: how to obtain a visa; hints and suggestions from previous volunteers to a site; copies of volunteer talks/ lectures; curriculum information; trip reports from previous volunteers, etc. To receive access to the *HVO KnowNET*, contact HVO Member Services at membership@hvousa.org.

NOTE: The International Development and Education Award (IDEA) provides support for early-career oncologists in low- and middle-income countries by establishing strong relationships with leading ASCO members who serve as scientific mentors to each recipient. Recipients of this award will attend ASCO's Annual Meeting and participate in a post-Meeting visit to their mentor's institution in the U.S. or Canada. Recipients will also receive 3 years of complimentary membership with ASCO, including a subscription to the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

There are currently [185 IDEA alumni](#) from over 40 countries. On average, each IDEA alumnus shares the information and new skills they learned with 50 colleagues in his/her country.

There is a separate award for those involved in palliative care. The requirements and benefits of this Award are similar to those of the IDEA program, except that participants in the IDEA-PC program

will be matched with ASCO mentors who specialize in palliative care, and eligible candidates must have a demonstrated interest in integrating palliative and supportive care services in their current institution.

Please keep this program in mind for the future as you are in contact with physicians from the countries in which you volunteer. Consider encouraging them to apply for the award.

HVO MEMBERSHIP: All volunteers with confirmed assignments must be members of HVO. The costs associated with developing a meaningful volunteer opportunity, as well as recruiting, briefing and placing a volunteer exceed \$900. Dues help defray these costs and provide essential funding for HVO ensuring that we will be able to continue placing volunteers – today, tomorrow and next year. Dues are \$150 for physicians and dentists; \$70 for nurses and allied health professionals; and \$40 for those in training. To join, visit our secure website (<http://www.hvousing.org/waystogive.shtml>) or call the HVO office.

For more information about HVO projects, please visit our web site at www.hvousing.org

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