



# Travel health update

Travel health can be complicated, and advice for health professionals and travellers is ever-changing. In this regular feature, Jane Chiodini seeks out and presents the latest travel advice and information to help you keep your practice up to date. She also revisits areas of on-going concern, for spot checks and further clarification

## WHO RECOMMENDS 'SMART' SYRINGES

We've known for many years that the reuse of needles and syringes, a practice that can be common in resource-poor countries, could pose a potential threat to travellers. A study sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014 estimated that in 2010, up to 1.7 million people were infected with hepatitis B virus, up to 315,000 people with hepatitis C and as many as 33,800 with HIV – all through unsafe injection practice. Sixteen billion injections are administered every year. Some of these though are unnecessary and happen because people in some countries believe an injection represents the most effective treatment, whereas oral medications would actually suffice. Also many health workers in developing countries give private injections to supplement their income, but some reuse the equipment to save money. Significant work has been undertaken since 2000, for example the number of hepatitis B infections through unsafe injections then was 21 million so has fallen by 83% to the 1.7 million in 2010, but still more progress can be achieved. The WHO has launched a report entitled WHO guideline on the use of safety-engineered syringes for intramuscular, intradermal and subcutaneous injections in healthcare settings. It hopes all

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countries will transition to the new smart syringe by 2020. Smart syringes have features that prevent re-use, for example, the needle retracts into the syringe barrel at the end of the injection, or the plunger breaks if the user attempts to pull back on the plunger after the injection. For more information go to <http://tinyurl.com/onlr63e>

## PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF TRAVELLERS

Unregulated travel medicine doctors are putting holidaymakers at risk, according to a position paper from the Faculty of Travel Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. The paper says that currently in the UK there is no requirement for education for those who deliver travel health advice, and highlights the lack of structure and delivery of travel medicine services, absence of a formal training pathway to a professional standard and a lack of assurance of practice against defined standards. The document makes a number of recommendations including: standards of best practice should be outlined and national guidelines adopted where appropriate; formal training by a suitably accredited provider should be mandatory for all health professionals offering medical advice to travellers; and the travelling public should be educated to recognise the standard of service that should be expected of providers, and how this is delivered. For more information and to read the report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/plz2bkl>

## NEW APP FROM CDC

As you may have gathered, I'm keen on using new technology such as apps to help travellers take greater responsibility for their healthcare when travelling

abroad. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed another useful app called TravWell which builds a trip to get destination-specific vaccine recommendations (remember these will be US based and may differ slightly from the national UK guidance we need to follow), preparation and packing checklists for the traveller, store travel documents, keep a record of medications and immunisations and set reminders to get vaccine booster doses or take medicines while traveling. Only available for Android devices right now, my enquiry to the CDC informed me that there will be a version for Apple or iOS devices very soon. See <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/apps-about>

## VACCINE TERMINOLOGY

Do you sometimes struggle with knowledge on live and killed vaccines, adjuvants and other vaccine ingredients such as gelatin, formaldehyde and antibiotics? Chapter 1 of the Green Book is academically informative but I never cease to be delighted with the useful presentation of information on NHS Choices. The page entitled Vaccination Ingredients helps you explain many queries that may arise when vaccinating, also provides direct access to the NHS vaccination schedules and has a delightful video clip explaining that many vaccines can be given to a child at one time ending in a statement that if 11 vaccines were administered to a child at one time, they would only use one thousandth (0.1%) of the immune system – a useful fact to remember when you want to administer a number of vaccines to a traveller in the one appointment! See <http://tinyurl.com/l8xekha> ●