



# Travel health update

Jane Chiodini looks back at how *Practice Nurse* played a significant role in her career development as a travel health specialist and how the discipline has also developed in the last 30 years

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I've been reading *Practice Nurse* since I started in general practice 28 years ago, and it was a small advert I saw in 1995 about a new Diploma/MSc course in Travel Medicine at the University of Glasgow, the first of its type in the world, that set me on my career in this field. I applied for that training and the rest is history! Someone who wrote prolifically for *Practice Nurse* at that time was Ursula Shine – she was inspirational and she, together with Jeannett Martin and Joan Sawyer, developed a course in travel health. They, Karen Howell, the first Chair of the RCN Travel Health Special Interest Group, and GPs Dr Cameron Lockie and Dr Jon Cossar, were the trail blazers for travel health in the practice nurse world.

After qualifying, I started writing articles for the journal. The first was 'A travel record card fit for Lloyd George,' which was all about risk assessment and included a sample form that I developed to fit in the patient note envelopes we had at that time – everything then was hand written! I've written for *PNJ* intermittently ever since but the longest spell has been this travel health update series, which I started in 2010.

## LIMITED VACCINES

What else has changed in travel over the last 30 years? Well, in 1988 GPs did much of the travel in a surgery but the vaccines available were limited – we had injectable typhoid and cholera that gave people very painful injection site reactions and quite severe flu like side effects. Hepatitis A vaccine didn't come onto the market until 1992 so instead we gave immunoglobulin which provided



three months protection. Yellow fever vaccine was given for travel but there was nothing for rabies, Japanese encephalitis or tick borne encephalitis, and hepatitis B vaccine wasn't considered for travel. Chloroquine and proguanil were the malaria chemophylactic drugs used for Africa, mefloquine was the only alternative on the market, we didn't use doxycycline then and atovaquone plus proguanil didn't exist. TRAVAX was around but in a very different format from today and most of us didn't use the Internet.

However, *Practice Nurse* produced a travel vaccine and malaria guidance chart for many years and at that time, this was a very helpful tool. It was written by Lorna Boyne (nee Calvert) who still works in the Travel and International Health Team of Health Protection Scotland (HPS). Lorna has just been appointed to take over the role of Nurse Consultant in Travel Medicine from Fiona Genasi who retires at the end of February. Many congratulations to both of them.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Formal education in travel health began in 1995 and the Faculty of Travel Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow formed in 2006. The Faculty's purpose is to raise standards of practice and achieve greater uniformity in

provision of services in order to protect the health of the traveller and they provide education and training in travel medicine. It was a huge honour for nurses to be admitted to this Royal Medical College in our own right based on our qualifications, and I will take over as Dean in October this year, as the first nurse to hold this position.

Perhaps the biggest impact on travel health care over the past three decades has been the use of the databases – TRAVAX and TravelHealthPro (and MASTA in the private sector). Global resources to determine country-based health risks, combined with UK guidance such as the Green Book, and the UK malaria guidelines, not only guide us as to best practice for individualised patient advice for their destination, but also provide a host of other information and educational resources.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

And more recently, the use of social media helps us to share knowledge, experience and opinion providing a platform for discussion with like-minded travel health practitioners similarly passionate about their work. If you're not part of this group yet, I commend to you TravelHealth Professionals UK and Ireland, a closed group found at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TravelHealthProfessionalsUK/>