



**Health Volunteers Overseas**  
*Transforming Lives Through Education*

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## **Physical Therapy St. Lucia Project Description**

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**GOALS:** To provide continuing education training for the physical therapy staff and nursing staff at St. Jude Hospital, and to support patient care and community outreach.

Specific topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

1. Development of in-patient program in coordination with nursing staff
2. Exercise progression
3. Neurological treatment especially s/p CVA
4. Ortho-manual therapy skills and treatment of spinal disorders
5. Hand therapy

**LENGTH OF ASSIGNMENT:** 1 week minimum.

**VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS:** Volunteers must be fully licensed physical therapists with at least 2 years of experience. Most areas of physical therapy are welcome, however, those specialized in pediatrics and geriatrics are not currently recruited. OT's and prosthetists/orthotists may volunteer. PT's and OT's with wound and lymphedema experience are also needed.

**CURRENT SITUATION AT ST. JUDE HOSPITAL:** St. Jude Hospital experienced a major fire September 9, 2009. The entire surgical wing, including the Operating, Recovery and Central Supply rooms were completely destroyed. The Pediatric Ward and Laboratory were severely damaged. The Hospital has been completely evacuated and is now located at the George Odlum Stadium a few miles away from the hospital site. The majority of services have been reestablished with a 50-60 bed capacity. It is the stated intention of the National Government to build a new hospital.

**PROJECT:** The Physical Therapy Department is open Monday - Friday from 8:00am - 4:00pm with staff providing weekend and holiday coverage. The current staff includes 2 staff therapists and 1 hospital trained assistant. There is also a prosthetic clinic run by a part time limb fitter.

The in-patient load is a mixture of neurological, orthopaedic, wound care and cardiopulmonary patients. The emphasis on the neurologic patients is for patient/family education as inpatients are discharged once medically stable. Amputations and other complications of diabetes, burns and post-surgical repairs of tendon lacerations are common conditions treated in the department.

Out-patient care is mainly orthopedic (60%) and wound care (25%) with a smaller percentage of neurological and hand (tendon) injuries. Most patients attend 1 or 2 sessions a week with the emphasis being on patient education and home exercise program progression.

The volunteer will provide patient care in addition to participating in the continuing education of the staff at St. Jude Hospital. Volunteers should be prepared to provide at least 2 in-service sessions a week while they are in St. Lucia. The session can be an informal talk with the therapy staff or an hour long presentation to the hospital staff. The volunteer will provide training for the current PT assistant in one or more of the following areas: modalities, range of motion, general

therapeutic exercise, patient handling, pressure ulcer prevention, vital signs, cardiopulmonary physio, documentation, and more. The physical therapy department would also like to provide additional education to patients and the community on diabetic foot care.

There also may be the opportunity to do community education around St. Lucia. Volunteers may spend half a day once or twice a week teaching in the community. The department does outreach for homebound persons (mainly neurological) and for special needs children who are unable to attend the special education center. The emphasis of this program is on family and patient education. The department also works with the Vieux Fort Special Education Center and the Malgretoute Nursing Home focusing on the training of staff there and the establishment and progression of treatment programs though the Special Education Center is closed during the summer months.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** see "St. Lucia General Information" document

**EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES:** The Physical Therapy Department currently has a stationary bike, ultrasound unit, mat table, Jobst extremity pump, cervical traction, electrical stimulation unit, whirlpool, tilt table, parallel bars, cuff/dumbbell weights, Swiss ball, paraffin wax bath, and wall pulleys.

The hospital is primarily in need of dressings for wound care including: hydrogel, hydrogel impregnated gauze, alginate, unnaboot, compression stockings, enzymatic debriders, occlusive dressings, coban, theraputty, theraband and ace wraps.

Additionally, any relevant books, journals, or video tapes may be helpful for teaching purposes. The hospital has a TV/VCR, PowerPoint, and an overhead projector.

Since the needs of the hospital change from time to time, please check with the Project Director before arranging to obtain any materials, or contact the Physiology Department in St. Lucia.

**HOUSING:** See "St. Lucia General Information" document for further details.

**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:** English is the country's official language, however many St. Lucians also speak a French Patois. Though most people converse freely in English, you should always speak slowly and clearly so that your accent will be understood.

**PASSPORT & VISAS:** A passport is required. Passports must be valid for 6 months **after the end of the volunteer assignment**. See "St. Lucia General Information" for details.

**REGISTRATION WITH US EMBASSY:** Volunteers are encouraged to register with the local U.S. Embassy. See "St. Lucia 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:** Weather remains a constant in St. Lucia with average temperatures usually in the low to mid eighties. Precipitation is also a constant, with roughly half of the days in each month being "wet days." In the rainy season, May-November, showers are frequent and there are occasional torrential downpours.

Casual, lightweight, permanent press clothing is recommended. For men, it is advisable to bring two pairs of (washable) lightweight slacks and short-sleeved shirts. For women, cotton skirts and dresses are most appropriate and comfortable for work. Volunteers also may wear scrubs. Shoes with socks (per OSHA) are mandatory. Outside of the hospital, shorts and a light sweater or sweatshirt for some (rare) cool evenings are recommended. Most people wear sandals or tennis shoes.

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:** Confirmed volunteers are required to submit documents to St. Jude Hospital as part of the application process. See “St. Lucia General Information” document for further details.

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](mailto:membership@hvousa.org).

**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 web site (<http://www.hvousa.org/waystogive.shtml>) or call the HVO office.

For more information about HVO projects, please visit our web site at [www.hvousa.org](http://www.hvousa.org)

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