

West Virginia University
Office of Graduate Medical Education
Guideline on Visiting International Medical Graduate (IMG) Observerships

STATEMENT OF GUIDELINE

This guideline has been developed to provide guidance to clinical departments that choose to offer observerships to visiting international medical graduates (IMG) who are not in an ACGME approved graduate medical educational training program or ECFMG approved nonstandard training program.

The primary objective of the West Virginia University School of Medicine is to provide instruction and educational opportunities to currently enrolled/employed residents and/or fellows. To that end, observerships are to be offered on a limited basis.

GENERAL PROCEDURE

The availability of observerships at West Virginia University and its affiliated hospitals is at the discretion of individual clinical departments. The department's discretion whether to offer observership experiences is to be based on the program's availability of resources and preferences with the primary aim of not limiting educational experiences of the West Virginia University students and graduate trainees. The addition of these observers must not compromise the learning experience of our current learners (residents/fellows/medical students).

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this guideline, the following definitions have been established:

- **VISITING IMG** – is defined as an international medical graduate (IMG) physician who received his/her basic medical degree or qualification from a medical school located outside the United States and Canada. The location of the medical school, not the citizenship of the physician, determines whether the graduate is an IMG. U.S. citizens who graduated from medical schools outside the United States and Canada are considered IMGs. Non-U.S. citizens who graduated from medical schools in the United States and Canada are not considered IMGs.
- **OBSERVERSHIP** – Defined as the position of observing patient care in a health care setting without patient contact, for the specific purpose of gaining medical knowledge. Observership does not result in credit of any kind or type.

VISITING IMG OBSERVERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

1. Graduation from a non-LCME medical school and/or non-ACGME residency program

2. Passage of USMLE step 1, step 2, or its acceptable equivalent.
 3. Fluency in English
- Individuals who do not qualify for an IMG Observership are individuals who have not yet graduated from medical school. These medical students should apply for a visiting student medical elective through the University's Visiting Student Learning Opportunities (VSLO) portal.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Chair of the Department or faculty designee should consider the following before observation. The IMG Observership process must not be delegated to the GME program manager.

1. Applicant cover letter describing desired program observership
2. Applicant CV
3. 2-3 Letters of reference
4. Departmental attestation
5. USMLE or its acceptable equivalent score report for Steps 1, 2, and if available, Step 3.

It is incumbent on the department to ensure the IMG observer has completed the following before observership.

1. Immunization records as required by employee health for anyone observing in the clinical environment.
2. Appropriate Visa status. Contact the HSC Global Engagement Office for any questions.
3. WVU hospital photo ID
4. HIPAA and OSHA training

The Chair of the Department or faculty designee **MUST** notify the DIO of the following, prior to the start of the observership:

- Observer's full name
- Country of origin
- Approved dates of observership

OBSERVERSHIP RULES & RESTRICTIONS

- Observation is limited to no more than 3 months. Observerships may not be extended. Observership in more than 1 department during this period is prohibited.
- The observership is a voluntary experience that does not constitute medical education, graduate medical education, continuing medical education, or any training leading to licensure or board certification.
- All observers must wear the appropriate WVU and affiliated hospital photo ID at all times while on site. All badges must be collected and deactivated at the end of the rotation.

- The School of Medicine will not provide housing, food, or other accommodations. The School of Medicine will additionally not pay observers, provide reimbursement for travel expenses, or provide an honorarium.
- It is the responsibility of the accepting WVU faculty member and Department to notify his/her team that there will be an observer rotating with them, and to tell the observer where to meet the team on the first day of observation.
- It is the responsibility of the observer to be dressed professionally and to maintain proper decorum and hygiene.
- Observers must complete all institutional compliance requirements prior to starting their observership. This includes HIPAA and OSHA training.
- The supervising faculty attending, physician attending, physician in training, or other WVU faculty and staff representative must directly supervise observers at all times.
- Observers MAY NOT provide medical care, conduct patient interviews, conduct a medical history, examine a patient, provide medical advice to a patient, or assist in any procedure. Additionally, observers may not engage in collaborative research.
- Observers MAY NOT have access to the Electronic Medical Record nor make entries into patient medical records, make copies of any patient medical records or other materials identified with patient names or other patient information.
- Any violation of the above can result in immediate termination of the observership.
- Observership permission may be withdrawn, at any time, should the situation warrant it.
- The Office of Graduate Medical Education reserves the right to modify any of the above guidelines at any time.

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