

# The tacit bargain in short-term medical missions

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### **The Tacit Bargain in Short-Term Medical Missions**

#### **Why US Physicians Go and What It Costs**

Paul Henry Caldron

1. The US physician who participates in Short-Term Medical Missions (STMMs) is most likely to be a mature surgeon, anesthesiologist or pediatrician, married with few or no children at home, with a lower than average annual income compared to other US physicians, and goes to Latin America because of its proximity. *(This dissertation)*
2. A set of personality traits forms a foundation for attraction to and satisfaction with STMMs and consists of high self-confidence, flexibility, unselfishness, tolerance for arduous and less sanitary conditions, and strong ethics. *(This dissertation)*
3. The US physician's most common key motivator, the satisfaction from helping others, usually springs from personal core values, rather than religious affiliation or religiosity, or medical oath. Feedback from both face-to-face experiences with patients and teaching legacy effect stimulate a virtuous cycle of repetition. *(This dissertation)*
4. The absolute and relative prevalence of US physician participation in STMMs and mission numbers are increasing. Participation prevalence may have approached 16% in 2012. *(This dissertation)*
5. Tax exempt annual composite outlays for US STMMs are comparable to benchmarks of official US foreign aid, and the man-hours devoted to them may stress already stretched physician resources in the US. *(This dissertation)*
6. STMM growth is fueled by word-of-mouth, facilitated by the exposure of opportunities through internet technology, and is disconnected from nationalistic motives and medical professional societies. *(This dissertation)*

7. The most important single central fact about a free market is that no exchange takes place unless both parties benefit. (*Milton Friedman, 2000*)
8. How selfish so ever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.” (*Adam Smith 1881-1887*)
9. We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. (*Albert Einstein 1946*)
10. Progress in human development is only sustainable if the effects of advances on those left behind are mitigated.
11. Pursuing the PhD is an exercise in utility from which one emerges with intact humility.