



Advice to Nurses, Paramedics & Other Health Professionals on Becoming an Expedition Medic and Appropriate WMT Training

Introduction

WMT invites nurses and other healthcare professionals including paramedics and physiotherapists with an interest in wilderness medicine to attend our courses. This document aims to help you choose which course(s) are most suitable for you between our Explorer series and Medic series of courses. <http://wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk/explorer-series-courses> (mainly for laypeople) and <http://wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk/medics-series-courses>

Qualifications & Accreditation

Many nurses, paramedics, OHPs and laypeople travel abroad as "expedition medics". *Expedition medic* is very much a British term (that's replaced the military rooted term *expedition medical officer* - EMO) to denote the person that has special responsibility for the team's health. What you can do medically in the field is a matter of consent and your level of training, experience and qualifications (and confidence). Usually, but not always, only large (or well funded) expeditions will take on dedicated "medics" where health care is the primary role and if they do, they may prefer to appoint a doctor. This is not always the case. WMT worked with sailor Chay Blyth's BT Global Challenge 'round the world yacht race teams many years ago. His philosophy was that it was easier to teach a top sailor some medical skills than teach a doctor to be a competitive sailor!

So, where the expedition is going and what it is doing has a bearing on its requirements for someone to fulfil a medical role. Other, perhaps smaller, organisations may look for people with a broader skill set who, for example, will be the expedition leader and the "medic", or a climbing guide and medic, or the yacht's navigator and the medic as examples. Youth expedition companies such as World Challenge are often short of adult female staff for trips with girls so being a woman, a qualified mountain leader and a nurse or paramedic with specialised WMT training could be the ticket to adventure!

As you may have already gathered, it is important to appreciate that there is no "qualification" as an expedition medic. The closest that comes to this is the Diploma in Mountain Medicine (DiMM) - see www.medex.org. Don't be fooled by course titles such as WEMT either (wilderness emergency medical technician). In the UK, the terms WEMT or EMT does not have any legal status like nurse or

paramedic does – it's just marketing! (See also the WMT pages on Accreditation under the Advice tab).

The take home point is that the opportunities for joining an expedition as the medic may come down to how skilled/qualified you are in the outdoors or in other ways suitable to the trip (like being a skilled camera operator for a film project) in addition to your medical background and talents. Expedition medic jobs are either voluntary, expenses only, paid or you will be expected to contribute to cover the cost of your participation. It would be hard to make a living as an expedition medic. It's more realistic to do this in parallel to a paid career or during time off and holidays.

Which WMT course?

Your current level of medical experience and training will partly determine which WMT course is most suitable for you. Please see the detailed course content for each programme on the website. However bear in mind that unless you are a doctor or qualified to prescribe, you will need to get a prescription to obtain suitable drugs and medications - POMs - to be able to put together a useful expedition medical kit for overseas use (and you'll need the training to know how to use POMs). WMT will provide you with this training and authorisation on all Explorer course and it is valid for 2 years, but this facility is not granted and the detailed use of POMs is not covered on our Medic courses that are mainly attended by doctors.

Explorer courses include Far From Help (2 days non-invasive training that covers oral POMs, antibiotics etc) and Advanced Medicine (4 days that includes Far From Help plus 2 days of invasive training – stapling wounds, and giving i.m. injections).

Nurses and paramedics with experience, for whom the POM facility isn't important (or after doing an Explorer course as many do first) are welcome to join any of WMT's Medic courses which are well within the comprehension of qualified healthcare professionals of all disciplines but if you're fresh out of college the best starting point is probably an Explorer course. Medic courses range from 2 day jungle and mountain medicine themed courses, to 5 day events in Chamonix, France (winter and summer), to week-long Morocco expeditions and a week-long Expedition Skills courses (also for Explorers with either Far From Help or Expedition Medic as the 2-day WMT medical module).

How do I find an expedition job?

We are often asked "***how do I go about finding an expedition job?***". On Medic course we discuss researching expedition opportunities and give you a database of expedition organisations as a starting point and we talk more generally about how to get into the "expedition network". These topics are not covered on Explorer courses. Medic courses count towards CPD credits (and there's no reason why Explorer courses can't as well in some circumstances).

The skills, knowledge and inspiration acquired from any WMT course will help prepare you to operate independently as the team medic or as part of a bigger expedition medical team, say with Raleigh International, MSF or other large expedition organisation or endeavour. Indeed, Raleigh would require you to have undertaken a specialist wilderness medicine course like those offered by WMT.

Before you head overseas to act as an expedition medic, if you are a registered medical professional, you are advised to inform your professional defence body of what you intend to do in a medical capacity and be sure you are properly insured and indemnified.

Further information

See in the drop down menu on our website for the EXPLORER and MEDICS tabs for much more detail about all courses on offer.

For **upcoming course dates** see each course web page or this **All Course Dates** page. All bookings and payments are made online. <http://wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk/all-course-dates>

For the **latest WMT news** via email, sign up for our newsletter halfway down the home page. <http://wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk>

For like minded groups (of nurses or paramedics), it may be that a bespoke, customised WMT course is the best answer to your training needs. Please ask for more details.

Thanks for reading. We welcome any further questions or feedback on how useful this note was via email.

e. wmt@wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk

w. www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk

This note is also available on our website at: <http://wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk/advice-to-nurses-paramedics>

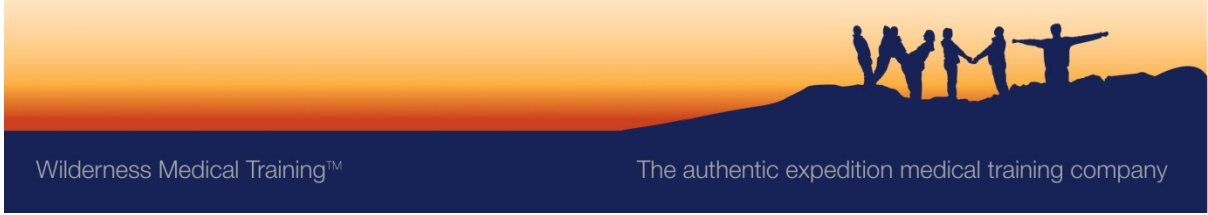
Please get in touch anytime.

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