

11-14-2018

# Beyond Continuing Education: Continuing Professional Development and the CTH

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## Recommended Citation

Goad J. Beyond continuing education: continuing professional development and the CTH. *J Travel Med.* 2018;26(3):tay128.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tay128>

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## **Comments**

This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of a letter accepted for publication in *Journal of Travel Medicine*, volume 26, issue 3, in 2018. The definitive publisher-authenticated version is available online at DOI: [10.1093/jtm/tay128](https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/tay128).

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International Society of Travel Medicine

## **Beyond Continuing Education: Continuing Professional Development and the CTH**

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In September 1999, the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) began the process of creating the Body of Knowledge for the practice of travel medicine. This blueprint for the educational needs of a practicing travel medicine provider has been revised three times since its original release (2006, 2012, and 2017) and is available online (<http://www.istm.org/bodyofknowledge2>). This outline provides the main content areas and relative weighting of topics that are mapped to the ISTM Certificate of Knowledge exam. The exam was first given in 2003 in New York City and has subsequently been administered globally at least once a year in conjunction with the Congress of the ISTM (CISM) or a regional travel medicine meeting. Successfully completing the exam confers the Certificate in Travel Health (CTH) credential. As of January 2018, the exam had been given 16 times with now more than 2,500 CTH exam holders representing 67 countries.<sup>1</sup> The CTH exam is taken by physicians, pharmacists and nurses. From country to country and profession to profession, there is a wide variety in the travel clinic practice and the training of travel medicine providers. One time assessments, such as the CTH exam, is important to establishing a standard level of knowledge, but ongoing education that focuses on the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the pre-travel clinic consultation should be a priority.<sup>2</sup> A recent bibliometric mapping of the Journal of Travel Medicine with the ISTM Body of Knowledge revealed that published articles since 1994 have covered the major areas of emphasis, especially pre-travel/consultation (30.5% of all published articles).<sup>3</sup>

In 2011, the ISTM Certificate in Travel Health Renewal Program (CTHRP) was initiated to help ensure that the holders of the CTH remain current and engaged in the field of travel medicine. The CTHRP requires CTH holders to renew their certificate every 10 years either through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or re-taking the CTH exam. The CTHRP CPD pathway allocates points to specific areas important for maintaining competence in travel medicine including attending and providing continuing education, clinical practice, scholarship, professional travel medicine association work and other related travel medicine work. At least 70% of the CPD pathway is allocated to continuing education. Over the last 20 years, the availability of travel medicine continuing education and training program have improved, but are still discontinuous across medicine, pharmacy and nursing.<sup>4</sup> The ISTM chose CPD instead of just requiring CE as the former offers the opportunity for travel medicine providers to embrace a lifelong approach to enhancing their knowledge and skills.

The World Health Organization defines CPD as “The wide-ranging competencies beyond clinical update, research and scientific writing, multidisciplinary context of patient care, ethical practice, communication, management and behavioral skills, team building, information technology, audit, and appropriate attitudinal change to ensure improved patient outcomes and satisfaction.”<sup>5</sup> The ISTM believes this comprehensive approach to lifelong learning will result in the public and healthcare providers having greater confidence in the travel medicine knowledge and skills of the CTH holder.

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