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On Call International Advises Students to Plan Ahead before Travel Abroad

As more students travel the world, the emergency travel and medical assistance provider explains how to plan for the unexpected

Salem, N.H. – August 12, 2008 – With the new academic year fast approaching, many students and their parents or caregivers will be encouraged to consider study abroad programs, not only as part of their college experience, but at the high school level as well. According to a report published by the Institute of International Education*, the number of students receiving credit for overseas studies is up 150 percent. However, these students are not just backpacking through Europe anymore. They are traveling to China (up 38 percent), Argentina (up 42 percent), and leaving on post-grad excursions to India and Russia.

While it's exciting and fulfilling to engage in cultural adventures, students and their parents or caregivers should be aware of the health and safety risks associated with traveling abroad and prepare accordingly for the unexpected. "This is especially critical for students traveling to countries where medical care is often very different than in the average U.S. hospital," said Dr. Robert Wheeler, medical director for On Call International, a leading medical and travel assistance company. "Navigating these differences and knowing what to do in case of an emergency is where the challenge lies."

On Call International assists travelers with emergency medical, security and travel services 24/7/365, and specializes in medical evacuations from any point on the globe. "In a sense, On Call serves as a silent travel companion, arming students with timely physician advice and medical assistance," explained Dr. Wheeler.

On Call International recently assisted a student who fell 23 feet from a trail in Glasgow, Scotland, fracturing her pelvis. As the assistance provider for this student, On Call monitored the immediate medical care provided to her in the U.K. while expediting her mother's passport and travel arrangements to be at the student's bedside. Once Dr. Wheeler and the treating doctor in the U.K. determined she was well enough to travel, On Call transported the student and her mother back to the U.S., via air ambulance, for continued treatment and recovery back home in the States.

"This is a perfect example of how the unexpected can and does happen," said Dr. Wheeler. "Most students traveling abroad are doing so for the first time, and it's critical that they are prepared. After the passport and immunizations, contingency plans for medical care and evacuation should be near the top of your travel checklist, ensuring that you know where to turn in case of an emergency. Luckily the student in Glasgow and her parents had planned for the worst, which ultimately saved her life."

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On Call suggests the following pre-travel tips for students and parents or caregivers of students with plans to study abroad.

- Review pre-trip information from the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs (www.travel.state.gov) and the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov);
- Update routine immunizations as well as those against destination-specific diseases;
- Pack enough daily medications to last for at least one month;
- Bring along an adequate supply of contact lenses or an extra pair of glasses;
- Make sure someone back home has a copy of the traveler's itinerary, personal health summary, emergency and friends' contact numbers;
- Rent or purchase a cell phone with international calling capabilities;
- If you're a parent or caregiver and your child is headed to a country that allows consumption of alcohol at a younger age than the U.S., ensure they are educated on the effects of alcohol and are aware of the laws and penalties for alcohol-related offenses;
- Be sure your child knows the importance of fastening his or her seat belt when riding in an automobile. Statistics** report that automobile accidents are the leading cause of fatalities overseas;
- Parents or caregivers should make sure they hold a valid passport. In the event of an emergency, this will ensure their ability to travel immediately to be with loved ones;
- Purchase a medical, travel and security assistance membership that will provide 24-hour emergency services.

* *Open Doors 2006, Institute of International Education with funding from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, www.opendoors.iienetwork.org.*

***U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2007*

On Call International is a leading provider of customized medical, security and travel assistance for international business and leisure travelers as well as expatriates, students and others away from home. Operating 24/7/365, On Call International specializes in emergency evacuations from any point on the globe, assisting more than seven million travelers. The U.S.-owned and trained assistance company serves the travel, insurance and maritime industries. On Call is a member and the U.S. representative of the 26-partner International Assistance Group, a global network of independent assistance companies. For more information, visit www.oncallinternational.com.

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