

From Guidance to Global Standards: Developing a Universal Framework for the Provision of Travel Health Services

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Background:

Travel medicine is delivered across diverse settings by multiple professional groups, yet there is no universally agreed framework defining minimum standards for safe, effective, and equitable travel health care. In 2020, the Faculty of Travel Medicine (FTM), Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, published Good Practice Guidance for Providing a Travel Health Service. This guidance was widely welcomed and supported practitioners in implementing and defending standards of care, particularly within the UK. However, practitioner feedback and evolving service models have highlighted limitations related to geographic specificity, professional focus, and the advisory nature of “guidance”.

Aim:

To outline the rationale and strategic approach for developing a new, globally applicable Standards for the Provision of Travel Health Services, designed to support consistent minimum standards irrespective of profession or geography.

Approach:

The proposed standards adopt a competency-based, profession-neutral framework focused on what safe travel health care requires, rather than who delivers it. Core standards define minimum expectations for risk assessment, vaccination, medicines governance, safeguarding, documentation, quality assurance, and referral. These are supported by structured competency assessment and expectations for maintaining competence. Jurisdiction- and profession-specific appendices enable local implementation without diluting global principles.

Conclusion:

Moving from guidance to standards aims to improve clarity, equity, governance, and consistency in travel medicine practice worldwide, while supporting multidisciplinary and emerging service models. Ongoing international collaboration and stakeholder engagement will be central to this work.