



The Kokoda Track Foundation

## **Guidelines for Drug and Medication Donations to Villages along the Kokoda Track, Papua New Guinea**

### General Principles:

It is often felt to be a kind gesture to donate excess or spare medication to people in the developing world when it is realized that they have no access to reliable drugs or money to buy them. However, this is not always beneficial to the recipient and can be potentially dangerous, no matter how well intentioned.

Medicines donated by trekkers to porters or villagers along the track should fit safe practice guidelines e.g., from the World Health Organisation or the Australian Government which are available on the internet (see references below).

Donations should be given according to the recipient's needs, not on the perceived need by the donor. The quality of the medication must be the equivalent standard which would be used in Australia.

Medicines must fit these following general criteria:

- The medicine must be in date and not expired or contaminated
- The medicine must be labeled clearly and in English
- Can the recipient read the label?
- Care should be taken if to be used in children as they will require lesser doses
- The medicine should be able to be stored in the tropics and not require refrigeration / darkness etc.
- It should not be a prescription only drug

What is suitable to donate?

- Most over-the-counter ( i.e., non-prescription) medicines
  - E.g., Mosquito repellent sprays, gels etc.
  - Simple analgesics – paracetamol (Panadol), ibuprofen (Neurofen)
  - Worm medicines (anti-helminthics) e.g., Vermox
  - Antiseptics e.g., betadine
  - Oral rehydration solutions – e.g., gastrolyte

- Simple eye drops e.g., clear eyes or antibiotic eye ointment (not steroid drops)
  - Indigestion medicines e.g., Mylanta, ranitidine tablets
  - Sunburn cream
- Bandages and dressings are always suitable and needed e.g., crepe bandages, combine dressings, steristrips, blister packs etc
  - Slings for arm injuries

Problems with inappropriate donation:

- Inappropriate and indiscriminate use of antibiotics may not be appropriate for the infection being treated and can promote multidrug resistance of different organisms when used unsupervised.
- Most cough and cold medicines have not been proven to be of benefit, especially in children.
- Prescription drugs can be lethal and the effects cannot be monitored as there is rarely a doctor or nurse available. Examples of these are:
  - Heart or blood pressure medication
  - Diabetes medication
  - Anti-epilepsy / anticonvulsant medication
  - Steroids e.g., hydrocortisone, prednisone
  - Antidepressant or mood altering drugs

If drugs are to be donated to a PNG health facility e.g., aid post or health centre, then it should be what is requested by that facility and should be in accordance to their usual supplies as determined by the PNG Department of Health or the WHO List of Essential Drugs. The strength and presentation of each drug should, if possible, match what is available in PNG to avoid confusion or drug dose error. If donating drugs to a PNG health facility e.g., aid post or health centre, they should be put in the care of a qualified health worker, e.g., Community Health Worker, Nurse, Medical Officer etc.

The Kokoda Track Foundation has a list of medical supplies that are normally used by each aid post and health centre and is able to organize delivery of their usual supplies within Papua New Guinea. This is highly beneficial to the people along the Kokoda Track as their normal supplies are very sporadic and most health centres have little or no supplies. The Foundation provides health kits to many of the aid posts and health centres along the Kokoda Track. You can contribute to these kits by making a tax deductible donation to the Foundation.

[www.kokodatrackfoundation.org/getinvolved/donate/single-donation.html](http://www.kokodatrackfoundation.org/getinvolved/donate/single-donation.html)

For more information please contact the Kokoda Track Foundation at:

[www.kokodatrackfoundation.org](http://www.kokodatrackfoundation.org)

References:

Australian guidelines for drug donations to developing countries. Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nmp-pdf-augudddc-cnt.htm>

Essential Drugs – Practical Guidelines. Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)

[www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)

[http://www.refbooks.msf.org/MSF\\_Docs/En/Essential\\_drugs/ED\\_en.pdf](http://www.refbooks.msf.org/MSF_Docs/En/Essential_drugs/ED_en.pdf)

Guidelines for Health Care Equipment Donations. WHO

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

[www.who.int/hac/techguidance/pht/en/1\\_equipment%20donationbuletin82WHO.pdf](http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/pht/en/1_equipment%20donationbuletin82WHO.pdf)