

WashU
IMG Wellness



Relocation Guide



-Washington University International Medical Graduate Wellness Initiative

Welcome

Dear incoming resident/fellow,

Congratulations and welcome to WashU!
We wanted to share with you a guide that we put together for international medical graduates who are making the transition to be residents/fellows at WashU . As part of the [IMG initiative community](#), we understand the challenges you might face since we went through the same process ourselves. We've collected some important items that we think will help make the transition smoother. Of course, everyone's experience is unique, so please consider this guide as a general resource. Additionally, IMG Initiative has a variety of [recorded seminars](#) on topics such as visas, immigration, physician contracts, financial wellness. And if you have any specific questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out - **we're here to help!**

-Washington University International Medical Graduate Wellness Initiative





TRANSITIONAL NEEDS

- Whether you're on an H1B or J1 visa, your program director/coordinator should be able to connect you with the right people at Graduate Medical Education (GME) Office for assistance with visa arrangements. We understand that this process can be stressful, but don't worry - the visa specialists are there to guide you and make it doable, in a timely manner. Please also see the following links for further information on visas: [ECFMG pre-arrival resources](#) (particularly for trainees on J1 visa) and [AMA resources](#) (for all IMG trainees).
- Transportation: Welcome to St. Louis! When you first arrive, it may take some time to purchase a car and get a driver's license, so you might need to rely on public transportation. Luckily, you have some great options, including the bus and metro, or even biking. You can obtain a free pass for the metro as a WashU/BJH trainee! Just keep in mind that it's generally safer to use public transportation during the day rather than at night. Here are some useful links to help you get started:
 - a. [Get your FREE metro pass](#)
 - b. [Driving and Transportation | International Scholars | Washington University in St. Louis \(wustl.edu\)](#).
 - c. [Campus parking and shuttle information](#)

A lot of university employees and trainees use bikes for transportation and fun activities. Most of the streets in the area around the university have special paths for bikes. In several locations on campus, there are bike parking lots. Please get your lock to secure your bike.

<https://sustainability.wustl.edu/resources/alternative-transportation/resources-for-bikers/>. For trainees who chose to live further, using a bike might be a questionable option.

- Driving: you may want to have your own car or have a driver license to be able to travel to remote fun locations. Find information on [getting a driver's license here](#). Driving in the US is actually pretty similar to driving in other countries around the world. If you've driven before, you should be able to pass the computer and practical tests without too much trouble. During the first 90 days you can use your International driver license (IDL), until you obtain your Missouri driver license. It's important to make sure you buy a car from a reliable agency and have car insurance before hitting the road. Keep in mind that owning and maintaining a car can be time- and money-consuming, so it's a decision you should make when you feel comfortable and ready. Here is a link to check regarding maintaining a car in Missouri: <https://dor.mo.gov/motor-vehicle/titling-registration/buying-vehicle.html>.



TRANSITIONAL NEEDS

- Basic life needs as a resident in the US:

1. Housing: Saint Louis is a heterogeneous city from the safety and socioeconomic standpoint. You may follow Zillow or the Realtor app when picking an apartment or a house to rent. You will find reviews of previous renters and accurate prices. You can rent an apartment near the campus or off campus, just keep in mind to choose a safe neighborhood and look for options that are easily accessible by public transportation, especially if you don't have a car. Additionally, we encourage you to ask about the other IMG trainees' experience with housing in our [WhatsApp group](#). Please check out [this list from the trainees](#) for further information, but the options are not limited to it.
2. Healthcare: The healthcare system in the US can be quite different from what you're used to in other parts of the world, and the terminology used can be confusing at times. But don't worry - you're not alone! As you go through the onboarding process, it's important to choose a healthcare insurance plan that fits your specific needs. Benefits information can be found here:

[If you are primarily an employee of WashU](#)

[If you are primarily an employee of BJH or SLCH](#)

1. Having a primary care doctor is really important for maintaining your health and well-being. As an employee of BJH/SLCH/WashU Consortium, you have the option to see a primary care provider within the hospital system, but you're also free to choose a doctor outside of the hospital. WashU-employed trainees can use the onsite [WUCare clinic](#) for primary care. The GME Wellness Champions have also compiled a [list of trainee-recommended providers](#) and there are lists of physicians accepting new patient on the [GME Website](#). Keep in mind that new patient appointments may be less available than follow-up appointments, so it's important to be proactive and schedule one as soon as you can once you arrive in the city.



TRANSITIONAL NEEDS

4. Emotional Health: Training can be stressful, GME also has resources to support your emotional health. [Please check these out on the website](#). Adjusting to a new culture can be a challenging experience, especially for international graduates. It can impact your daily well-being and focus at work, so it's important not to ignore your emotions. Remember that your feelings are valid and very common. While we can offer some tips to help you tackle these challenges and alleviate discomfort, it's important to seek support from professionals if your emotions are disrupting your daily life. Our tips would include:

- Know where your home country community lives and where cultural stores are located. You can participate in holidays gatherings and activities.
- Develop friendships with both Americans and people from your own country/culture. Do that when it feels natural and not demanding.
- Try to spend your free time wisely by exploring new places, sports and food.
- Work on your English proficiency, talk the language whenever you can, and listen to books. Mastering the language will help you familiarize yourself to the American culture.
- Call your family regularly, use video calls for more connection.
- Visit your home country if possible on a regular basis. Have an open conversation with your director about planned vacations.
- Neutralize your expectations, other people around also can be unfamiliar with your culture, tell them if you didn't like something or if you have specific needs, that would help you build healthy relationships.
- You can ask questions and learn more about traditions or customs. Remember to approach these conversations with sensitivity and respect, and to be open to learning from different perspectives.
- You can stay true to your values and beliefs. If you find yourself in a situation that conflicts with your values, it's okay to step away or avoid it altogether.
- Join the IMG initiative group events and WhatsApp.



TRANSITIONAL NEEDS

5. Childcare:

- WashU provides a daycare service for children up to the age of five; however, the waitlist for enrollment can be quite extensive. We recommend that you begin the child enrollment process immediately upon receiving your match notification to increase the chances of securing a spot. Please check this out: <https://hr.wustl.edu/items/child-care/>. Some may find it more convenient to seek childcare services outside of the university. If you choose this option, look for certified daycares and schedule a tour before deciding. Some centers that trainees use can be found [here](#). Pay attention to any concerning signs during the tour (a helpful tip: check the Google rating for the daycare).
- For school options: When selecting a school for your child, consider the location of your home. In the city, you can find Charter schools and Magnet schools, while in the county, almost all schools are highly rated. For more specific names of schools according to where you will live, please reach out to our WhatsApp.

If your children don't speak English, don't worry – kids are great learners and very adaptable. We promise that after several months, you may even find yourself begging them to speak your native language! 😊

6. Fun and recreation: St Louis is a beautiful city. You can find lots of parks, museums, and wild nature. <https://explorestlouis.com/see-and-do/25-things-to-do-in-st-louis/>. Check out [Sauce Magazine](#) or [GME STL Food Recommendation List](#) for restaurant recommendations. Check out the GME [Things to Do in STL list](#) and [Grand Center Arts District](#) for variety of art events. Check out the [GME Interest Groups](#) if you are looking for people who have similar interests with you. Social support from people who share spirituality and background can be incredibly important for overall wellbeing. Facebook and Instagram can be a great resource for finding those communities within St Louis. There is a [Facebook Group](#) for all WU/BJC residents and fellows and you can follow GME Wellness and the IMG initiative on Instagram. The IMG Initiative at WashU is an excellent resource for making new relationships.



TRANSITIONAL NEEDS

6. Financial and utilities:

- Social security number, [Social Security Numbers | International Scholars | Washington University in St. Louis \(wustl.edu\)](#)
- Getting a phone number : you may walk in to one of the cellular stores like AT&T and have your US phone number .
- Taxes [Filing Taxes in the U.S. | International Scholars | Washington University in St. Louis \(wustl.edu\)](#).
- Opening a bank account <https://blog.remitly.com/immigration/how-to-open-a-us-bank-account-immigrants-non-residents-guide/>

7. Language classes: [ELP Courses | English Language Programs | Washington University in St. Louis \(wustl.edu\)](#) . (the cost for ELP course is \$710/credit hour.

WashU employed fellows that have been here for 1 year could get a tuition waiver). Using English as a communicative language can be challenging, especially during the first few months of settling into a new environment. However, with time and hard work, you can definitely improve your language skills and use English as a powerful tool to build connections with people around you. The program directors and faculty members are aware of the unique backgrounds of international trainees and are always available to support them through this process. Don't hesitate to reach out to them for help and guidance.



WORK NEEDS

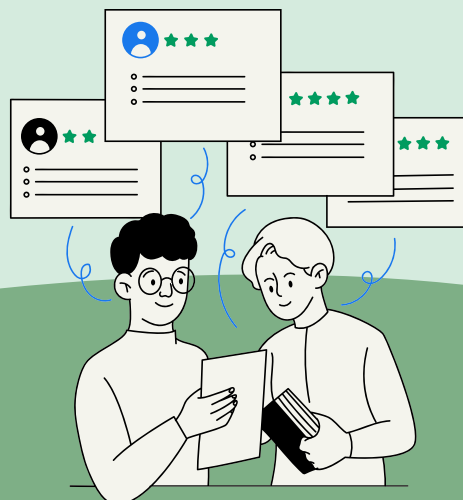
To work in the medical field, it's important to be familiar with the special aspects providers use in their practice. This includes handling technology like the medical records system (EPIC) and understanding medical jargon and abbreviations. Additionally, it's important to be familiar with interdisciplinary team dynamics and be comfortable typing notes and communicating effectively with families. These skills are essential for success in the US medical system, and it's important to start working on them as soon as possible.

1. Complete the “Introduction to the U.S. Electronic Health Record” module before starting your training. This module was created by ECFMG to help orient you to the use of the EHR and will help ease your transition to using the system here at WashU. Instructions were sent to you by ECFMG. You can also contact your new program director if you are not sure how to find it.
2. During the first months of training, it's important to dedicate most of your time to orientation as planned in each program. This is a great opportunity to learn how EPIC works, practice typing notes neatly, and get comfortable accessing medical records from outside hospitals. Familiarizing yourself with smart phrases, lab work, imaging, and ordering work-up tests is also crucial during this time. It's important to communicate openly with your colleagues when you are seeking assistance, this will make the process easier. Don't be afraid to ask questions, even if they seem basic. As you acquire these skills, you'll feel more comfortable and efficient. Remember, you will continue to learn new tips for using EPIC throughout your training, so stay curious and use whatever works best for you.
3. Medical jargon and abbreviations are commonly used in medical practice to make tasks easier. To help you become familiar with these terms, we created a [jargon guide](#) for commonly used words. However, it's important to recognize that there may be times when you need to look up an abbreviation on Google or ask a colleague for clarification. It's important to avoid using medical jargon and abbreviations during conversations with patients' families, as this can lead to confusion and misunderstandings. Always strive to communicate in clear, simple language that everyone can understand. With time and practice, you'll become more comfortable with medical jargon and abbreviations and be able to use them effectively in your practice.

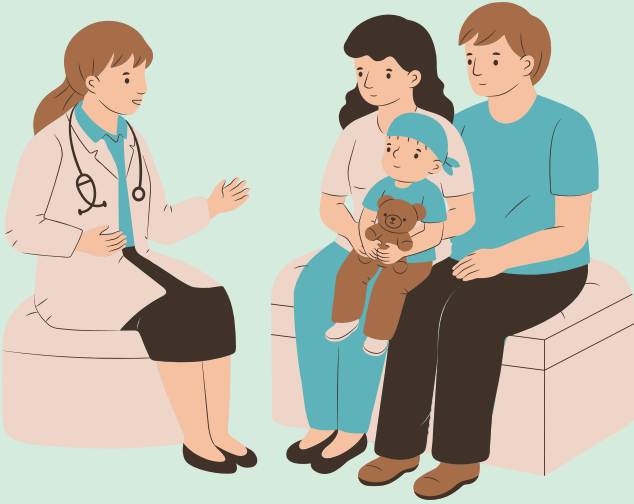
WORK NEEDS

3. Interdisciplinary team dynamics are crucial for practicing professional manners and providing high-quality care to patients. During rounds, you will work with a variety of team members, other than the physicians and nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists and social workers usually take active part in the patients' care. Communication is key in this setting, and it's important to strive for open, thorough, feedback-based, and kind communication. We understand that it can be challenging and frustrating to handle these interactions in a language that is not your native language, but with time and practice, you can acquire the necessary skills to communicate effectively. Watching how other team members communicate and practicing daily is an effective way to learn these skills. Some trainees have found that writing things down at first helps them to practice their wording. It's important to be patient with yourself and remember that with time and effort, you will become more comfortable and confident in these interactions. 😊

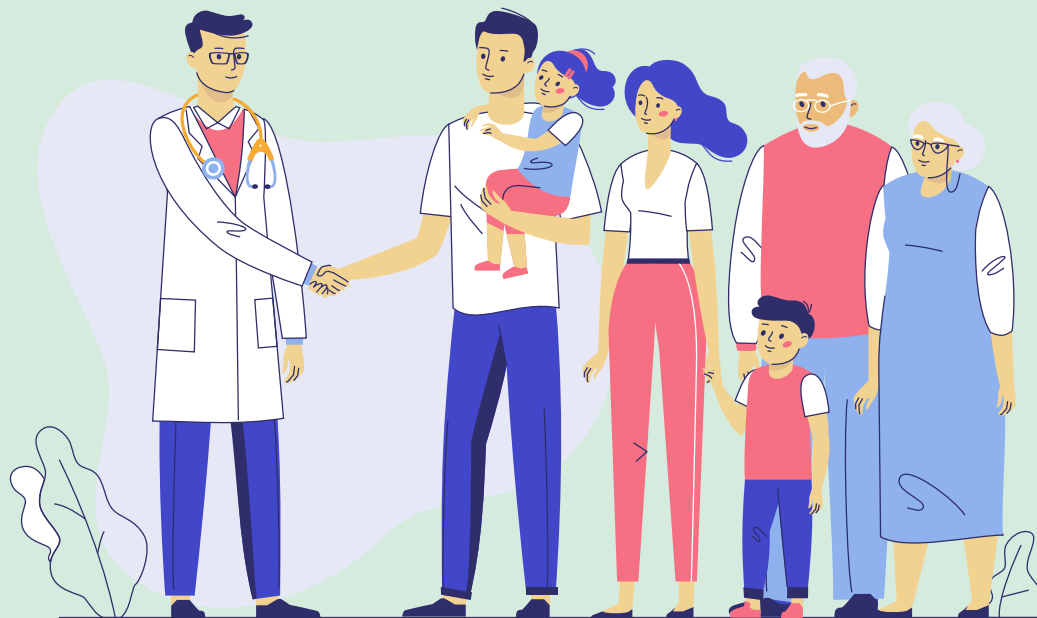
4. Clinical Notes: Medical documentation is a crucial element of professional practice. It ensures that your work and thoughts are presented and are part of the decision-making process and communication with other teams. To document effectively, you will need to collect important information about the patient and document your thoughts and plans clearly, thoroughly, and concisely. Clinical notes in the US maybe longer than the notes you are used to in your country. Regular feedback from supervisors will include comments about your notes. It's important to consider feedback as constructive and a valuable learning opportunity. If the feedback is nonspecific, don't hesitate to ask the attending for clarification and tips on how to make your notes better. Remember that this process takes time and requires hard work and honest feedback. Respect the process and use feedback to improve your documentation skills.



WORK NEEDS



5. Communications with families: When communicating with patients and their families, it's important to use simple language, maintain eye contact, show confidence, and actively listen to their questions and concerns. If you don't know the answer, it's okay to be honest and admit that you don't know. However, it's also important to commit to seek the information and provide it when you have it. Families are often aware that WashU is an academic institution and that you are a physician and a trainee at the same time, explaining your role in the team to them can help with this too. Building trust and rapport with patients and their families is part of good care.



Conclusion

During the academic year 2023-2024, the [IMG Wellness Initiative](#) community came together to address the challenges they faced and build an innovative network to support IMG trainees through the journey of training at SLCH and BJH. By joining their [WhatsApp Group](#) and attending upcoming events, you'll have the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and learn valuable tips for managing your daily experiences. We hope that by participating in these events, you'll be able to create positive memories and make the most of your time at WashU. Don't hesitate to reach out to the IMG Wellness Initiative community for support and guidance along the way.

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Author Information

This guide was created by Drs. Nadia Wattad, Can Mişel Kılçksız, Shao Ching Tu, Catherine Wegner Wippel, and Jennifer Duncan as part of the Washington University International Medical Graduate Wellness Initiative Project. Dr. Nadia Wattad is a fellow in the pediatric pulmonology division, Dr. Can Mişel Kılçksız is a psychiatry resident, Dr. Shao Ching Tu is a pediatric resident, Dr. Catherine Wegner Wippel is an internal medicine resident, and Dr. Jennifer Duncan is Director of Wellness at Washington University in St. Louis, School of Medicine.



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