
**SWISS TROPICAL INSTITUTE
BASEL UNIVERSITY**

**Practice Guidelines for Evaluation of Fever
in returning Travelers and Migrants**

THESIS

**prepared under the direction of
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Abstract

Background: fever upon return from tropical or subtropical regions can be caused by diseases that are rapidly fatal if left untreated. The differential diagnosis is wide. Physicians often lack the necessary knowledge to appropriately take care of such patients.

Objective: to develop practice guidelines for the initial evaluation of patients presenting with fever upon return from a tropical or subtropical country in order to reduce delays and potential fatal outcomes and to improve knowledge of physicians.

Target audience: a) first medical personnel, usually physicians, who see the returning patients, primarily in an ambulatory setting or in an emergency department of a hospital, b) specialists in internal medicine, infectious diseases and travel medicine.

Methodology: a systematic review of the literature - mainly extracted from the NLM database - was performed between May 2000 and April 2001 using the key-words *fever and/or travel and/or migrant and/or guidelines*. Eventually 250 articles were reviewed. The relevant elements of evidence were used in combination with expert knowledge to construct an algorithm with arborescence flagging the level of specialization required to deal with each situation. The proposed diagnoses and attitudes are restricted to tropical or subtropical diseases (non-autochthonous diseases). The decision chart is accompanied with a detailed document, which provides, for each level of the tree, the degree of evidence and the grade of recommendation, as well as the key points of debate.

Participants and consensus process: besides one guidelines methodologist and two specialists in travel/tropical medicine (the supervisor and the author), a panel participant of 11 European physicians with different level of expertise on travel medicine reviewed the guidelines. Thereafter, each point of the proposed recommendations was discussed with 15 experts in travel/tropical medicine from various continents. A final version was produced and submitted for evaluation to all participants.

Conclusion: although the quality of evidence was limited by the paucity of clinical studies, these guidelines, established with the support of a large and highly experienced panel participant, should help physicians to deal with patients coming back from the tropics with fever.