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PHARMACIST

With MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES you will be working in crisis and war zones in which there are very few, if any, clinics or health centres. As a pharmacist you will be responsible for the management of the drugs and the medical material, from ordering and storage through to transportation and dispensing in the health centres. You will ensure that the pharmaceutical guidelines are observed and that these align with the regulations that apply in the mission country. You will also be providing guidance to national staff and training them in the handling of drugs and medical material.

Take the challenge – work with MSF

During your mission you will experience challenging working situations and living conditions that will connect you with the team and the local people. You will work with basic tools, share amenities with your colleagues, including computers, showers and refrigerators. Improvisational skills and independence will be essential, as will the ability to remain calm and capable of working constructively in a team even under strained circumstances. This is because you will be working on the ground with a small, international, multidisciplinary team and in close collaboration with your local colleagues. You will learn a lot: about the people in your project and about yourself.

To become a pharmacist with MSF you will need ...

- a completed pharmacy degree with a qualification as pharmacist
- at least two years of professional experience in a hospital
- experience in the training and supervision of staff
- the ability to set priorities and take the initiative
- sensitivity in dealing with people from different cultures
- experience travelling or working in a 'developing' country
- willingness to work in conditions of social and/or political instability
- fluency in English; knowledge of French, Arabic and/or Russian an advantage
- six to twelve months availability
- very good computer skills in particular with Excel

"Discount contracts and endless rows of drawers seemed a long way away, as did state responsibility for the health of the population and national pharmaceutical guidelines – this was what characterised my daily work as a pharmacist with MSF. Together with my team, I was responsible for ordering, storing and dispensing the drugs. I showed my national colleagues how to record the consumption data. Furthermore I explained to them which doses of the different drugs were to be taken by adults and children and what they needed to look out for when dispensing them to the patients. Working for an emergency aid organisation also meant being prepared if necessary to support the medical and logistical teams wherever they needed help. Every day presented new tasks, which were sometimes difficult, but also interesting." Anna Eschweiler, Democratic Republic of Congo

"Due to the fact that there were no international pharmacists in our project, my role as medical coordinator was to supervise the national pharmacists. Together we worked to ensure that the drugs were always available in sufficient quantities. I also had to instruct the local team in how to store them properly: in dry conditions, sorted according to expiry date and, if required, away from the light and refrigerated. In cooperation with the logisticians, we organised the transport of the drugs by car or plane from the main camp to the local projects. Working days with MSF are often long and tiring. But it's also always very satisfying to see how together we can help a lot of people with even the most basic of means. Quality assurance would however be impossible without the specialist knowledge of the pharmacists." Elke Felleisen, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and other places

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Project work opens up whole new realms of experience: both professional and personal.

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