

Benefits and Harms of Short-Term Global Health Initiatives Among Rehabilitation Students: A Systematic Review

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Background

- More rehabilitation sciences students are engaging in short-term international experiences to gain clinical experience in a setting or with a population they may not have access to in their home country
- These trips are profoundly transformative for students but minimal investigation has focused on long-term impacts on the students and host populations resulting from these initiatives
- Though trips have shifted more toward mutually beneficial partnerships between home and host, previous research has focused primarily on the student perspective

Purpose

- To identify the benefits and harms of a short-term (less than 2 months) global health initiative (GHI) completed by students in formal rehabilitation educational programs on the student and host country population

Methods

Databases Reviewed

- Registered with PROSPERO and followed PRISMA guidelines
- Search Engines: PubMed, Embase, and CINAHL in English, Spanish, and French

Inclusion Criteria

- Rehabilitation students (PT, OT, and/or SLP)
- Student participation in GHI
- Supervision by licensed practitioner
- GHI between 1 day and 8 weeks

Data Extraction

- General characteristics of articles, students, and hosts
- Outcomes: benefits and harms
- Methodological quality: Oxford Level of Evidence

Outcomes

Benefits to Students

- Adaptation to Novel Healthcare System/ Resource Availability
- Improved Clinical Skills
- Increase in Cultural, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competence

Benefits to Hosts

- Increased Access to Therapy
- Novel Training
- New Equipment

Harms to Students

- Emotional Health Risk
- Safety Risk
- Culture Shock

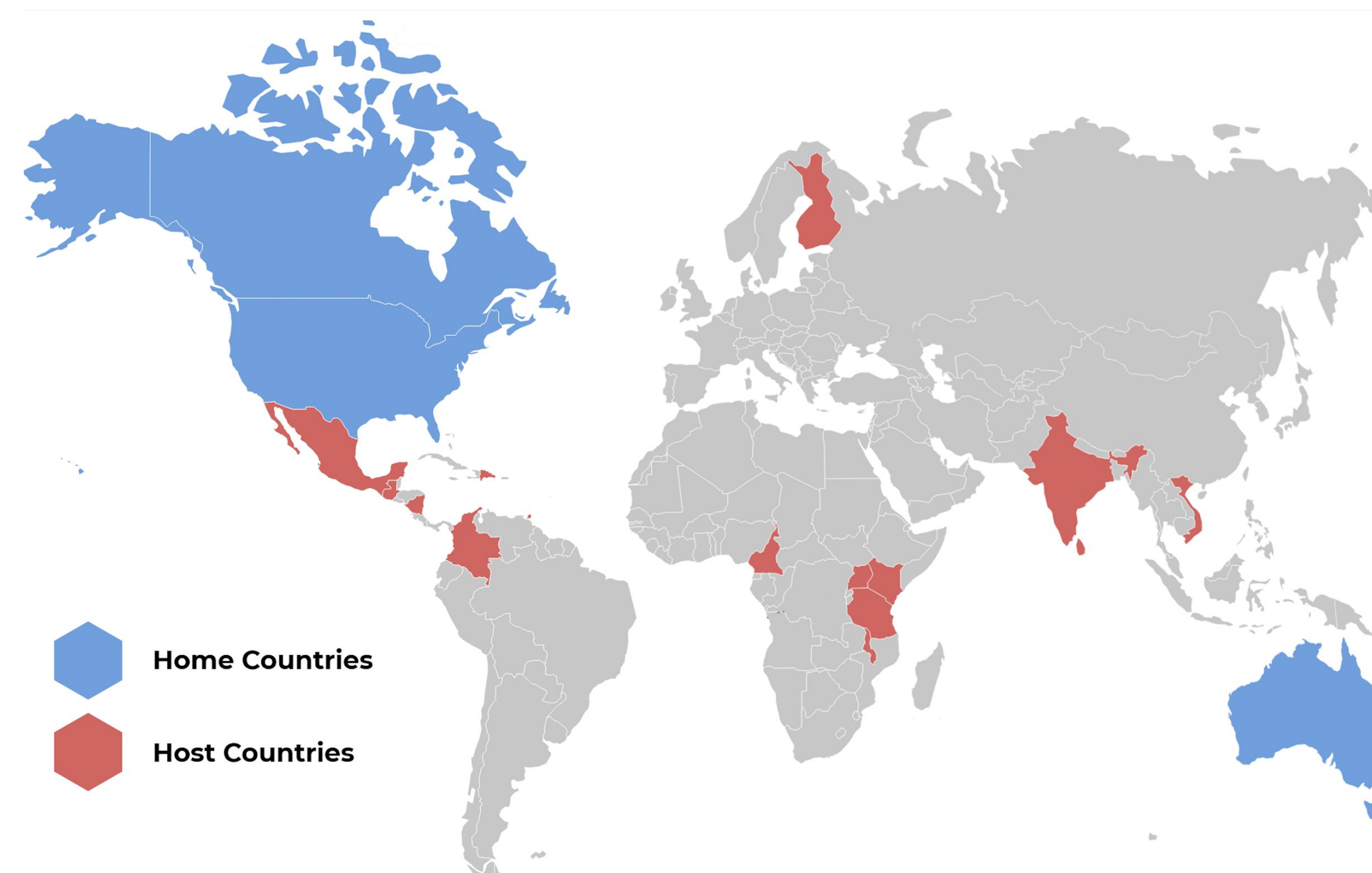
Harms to Hosts

- Lack of Sustainability
- Suboptimal Care
- Ineffective Utilization of Resources
- Decreased Productivity

Results

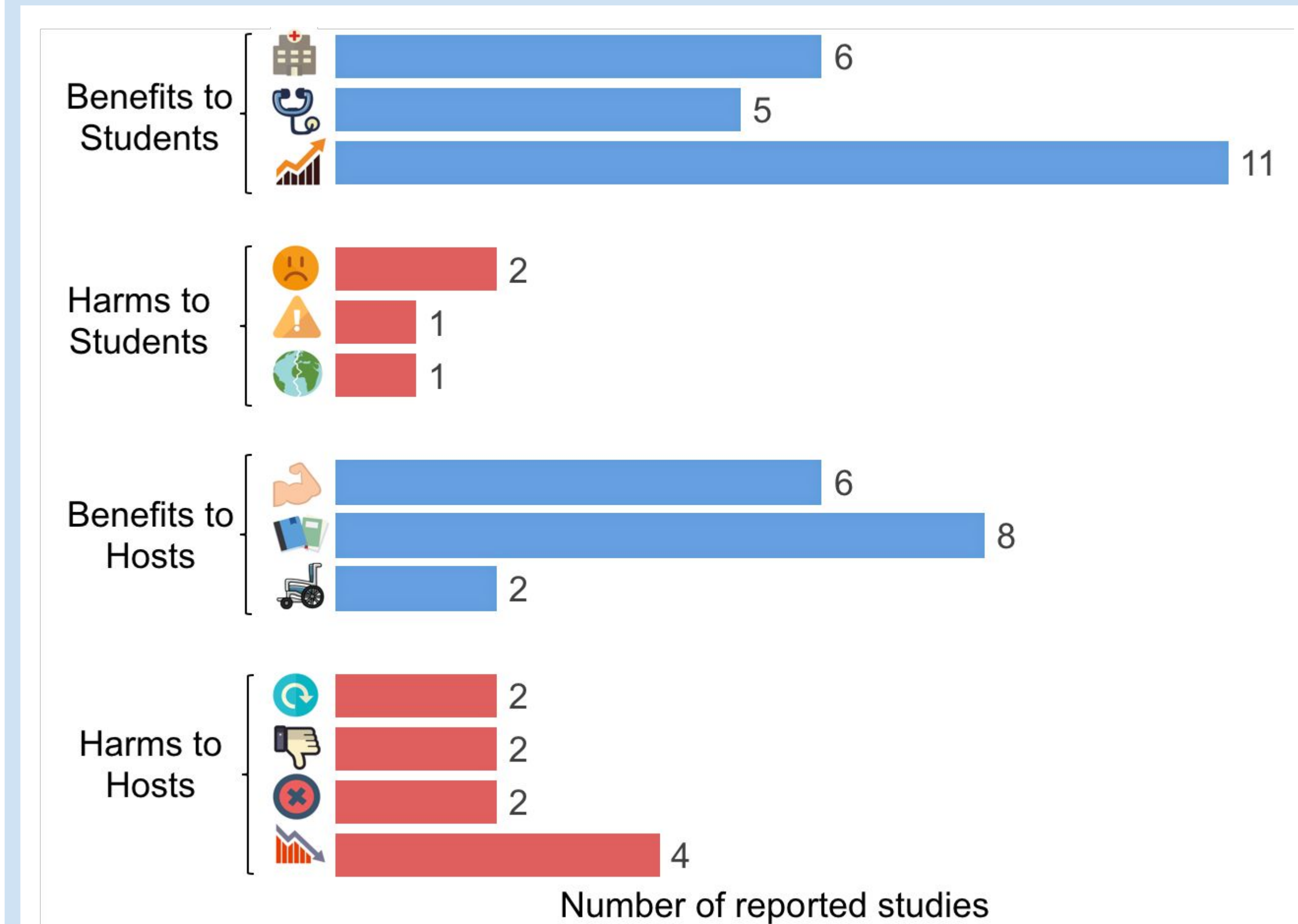
- **15 articles met eligibility criteria** to be included
- Most common purpose for a student participating in a GHI was to gain novel clinical experience
- Described GHIs specifically to 3 low-income, 10 middle-income, and 2 high-income countries

Countries Involved in Included GHIs



Results

- **87%** of the articles (13/15) discussed benefits to the student participating in a GHI
- **27%** of the articles (4/15) discussed potential harms to the student participating in a GHI
- **73%** of the articles (11/15) discussed benefits to the host community participating in a GHI
- **40%** of the articles (6/15) discussed areas of potential harm to the host community participating in a GHI



Conclusions

- Need for an established, sustainable partnership between home university and host organization
- Further research required to gain insight into the relationship between short-term GHIs and their potential harms and long-term effects on the parties involved

Clinical Relevance

- Short-term GHIs are gaining popularity within rehabilitation curriculums
- Understanding benefits and harms on both student and host population serves as a foundation for future initiatives to be developed to produce the most favorable outcomes for all parties involved

Acknowledgements/References

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