



## **Boomers & Travel to SE Asia**

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**Traveled to SEAsia in their 20's**

Some Boomers are visiting SEAsia for the first time but many are returning to countries where they visited as students and backpackers several decades ago.



**45 years later and they are going back...**

Boomers visiting this region now may have more disposable income and are looking for different experiences in the region.

## How does our approach as travel health nurses differ?



As travel health nurses (THNs) we always seek to customize our care – to the traveler and to the itinerary. This presentation addresses some aspects of Boomer travel that can alert the THN to important pre-travel issues for this generation of international travelers.

- Define the Baby Boomer generation
- Describe travel patterns of this generation
- Describe common physiologic changes for this age group
- Identify key elements of a Boomer pre-travel assessment
- List key counseling topics for Boomer travel to SE Asia

## Objectives

The slide lists the learning objectives for this presentation.

- Boomers and travel
- Age-related considerations for travel
- Focus: SE Asia Boomer issues
  - Pre-travel assessment
  - Immunizations
  - Pre-travel counseling
- Post-travel
- References



## Outline

This presentation will describe the Boomer population in the context of travel, review some important aspects of the ageing process as it applies to this travel group and destination, and then outline key considerations for the pre-travel and post-travel encounter. Select references are shared with special focus on two IAMAT texts of note.

- **Baby Boomer: born 1946 - 1964**

- Uptick in post WWII births
- *Generation of: Elvis, Beatles, Mickey Mouse Club, Woodstock, coined "mini-van", "mid-life crisis"*
- Ages 55-73 years
- 77 mil Americans- also NZ, Canada, Iceland
- 10, 000+ turn 65 daily for next 18y



**Who is a Boomer?**

The Baby Boomers derive their generational name from their birthdates- when there was a Boom in post WWII birthrates. It is a very large cohort that grows larger at a rate of 10,000+ each day...Boomers span almost two decades in terms of their ages.





Many Boomers are still quite active and energetic. Jerry Seinfeld (born in 1954), Stevie Nicks (born in 1948) and George Clooney (born in 1961) are all Boomers.

**Not stereotypical “senior citizens”**

Many Boomers still work full-time or part-time and remain very active in their careers and communities. Typically they see their parents, who are often still alive, as the “senior citizens.”

Boomers:

26% of U.S. population

Spend 80% of U.S. travel dollars

Major focus of travel industry



**“Grey nomads:  
A generation on the move!”**

The travel industry is now targeting this group very heavily sending out trip and tour notices often weekly to this age group. College and universities as well as cruise lines sponsor tours year round designed for this population. On tour company, Road Scholar- previously known as Elderhostel- runs thousands of trips each year for persons over 50.

- Comprise 5-30% international travelers worldwide
- More time for travel:
  - Longer trips
  - More frequent travel- 5 leisure trips/ year
- ↑ discretionary income
- Bucket lists
- Boomers plan early, well researched (↓last minute)
- Seek *experiences*, not just destinations

## **Boomers & travel as a priority**

Boomers have more time and money for travel and typically take 5 trips domestically or internationally every year. This is a group that rarely comes in for last minute pre-travel care, but rather sometimes months ahead having researched their destination extensively. Boomers often seek educational or cultural experiences, not just destinations to “check off a list.”

- Ancestral travel & VFR
- Foodie tours / Wine tours
- Off the beaten track
- Sustainable travel
- Voluntourism
- Spa & Wellness travel
- Educational
- Multigenerational/Girls Only
- Cruises, escorted tours (popular choices if health issues)
- Medical tourism\*
- Gap Year: Around the World



## Popular Boomer trips

This slide lists some of the common reasons for Boomer travel. Some trips such as voluntourism, medical tourism, VFR and the “Boomer Gap Year” (around the world trips) pose additional health and safety risks- contacts with locals, contact with sick persons, contact with animals, long duration, multiple countries, and potential risks inherent in receiving health care in another country. Boomers may also fail to recognize that the last time they visited this region they were in their 20’s or 30’s and some adjustments to their current trips may need to be made based on their current health status. Medical tourism grows more popular every year and a number of U.S. insurance plans offer incentives for patients to receive elective surgery abroad. THNs will want to keep up-to-date with this expansion of the travel market (another presentation , for sure)

## **Pre-travel Encounter: Important Considerations**

1. Provider mindset & language
2. Boomer age-related issues
3. Plan for traditional consultation + Boomer issues



### **Three step approach**

To best serve the needs of a Boomer during the pre-travel encounter, I suggest the THN focus on three elements: 1) your mindset and attitude towards this age group and the language you choose to use when talking with these travelers 2) awareness of important age-related issues that should be addressed in the assessment and counseling phases of the visit and 3) the need to combine the traditional assessment and care plan elements of a pre-travel visit to SEAsia with additional Boomer considerations. Much as the THN would customize a visit for a pediatric patient or a woman who is pregnant, Boomers will benefit from “specialized” care.

- Confront Western ageism
- As we age, we become ↑ *dissimilar*
- Boomers:
  - Not single cohort- generation spans 20 years
  - Diverse-very heterogenic group
  - "Feel-age" : subjective vs chronological age
  - Reject term "elderly"
- **Provide person-appropriate, not age-appropriate care**



(Bauer 2012, 2016)

## 1. Mindset for a Boomer encounter

Many providers lump all travelers over age 60 into one group. We see it when we hear about hesitancy to give YF vaccine to a 61 year old going to Yellow Fever Belt regions. In reality Boomers are much more diverse than even younger generations in terms of physical health. Clinicians need to follow the wise recommendation of Irmgard Bauer, our Australian colleague who suggests that when caring for this group we provide "person-appropriate, not age-appropriate care. For a moment think of three adults you know in their 60's. If they are anything like the three I am thinking of, I imagine they have very different health profiles- some retired and rather inactive, others taking on new career responsibilities and engaging in adventure trips the world over. One just had a knee replacement, but the other two are training for marathons. Boomers do not see themselves in terms of chronological age. You will frequently hear them say "I sure don't feel 66 or 72 or whatever." THNs can successfully work with these travelers if the nurses focus on the subjective "feel-age" of their patient. "Elderly" is not a term well accepted by Boomers- not even "seniors." AARP has changed their whole messaging to Boomers- that R used to be reserved for "Retired." The latest ads revamp the letters to mean "Real Possibilities."

## **Need to Factor the Impact of Ageing**

- “Individual process leading to multiple biological and functional changes”
- ↑Incidence of medical conditions as Boomers age



## **2. Boomers & ageing**

Boomers at every age, no matter how they may view their age, do experience some of the physiological changes of the ageing process. If the THN knows about typical changes for this generation, then the nurse can help the Boomer plan a trip that takes these changes into consideration.

### Boomers may experience:

- ↓ Sensory skills
- Immunosenescence (↓T & B cell function)
- Cognitive changes
- Drug-drug interactions
- CVD, Respiratory issues
- Gait & balance effects- trips, falls, trauma
- Total body water↓: ↑ dehydration risk
- Bladder capacity ↓
- ↓ perspiration, thirst, meds: ↑heat risks
- ↑ jet lag, motion sickness, insomnia, constipation
- Anxiety-10-20% of this group



## 2. Ageing & travel health

Here is simple list of health issues that can affect anyone ages 55 to 72. The very helpful *Older Traveller* text (listed in resources at the end of the presentation) shown on this slide has a few wonderful short chapters that go into these changes with the kind of detail that will help the THN when rapidly assessing and counseling Boomers. I have included some that will have particular relevance for any travel to the hot, humid countries of SEAsia: dehydration risk and heat risks, as well as jet lag from the very long flights from the U.S., and potential dangers when the traffic in cities such as Saigon and Bangkok are encountered by Boomers with sensory deficits (hearing, sight) and gait and balance issues.



### **GeoSentinel Data: Senior Travel Diagnoses**

- ↑LRTI, UTI, CVD, severe malaria
  - ↑Death: MVA, CVD
  - ↓TD (even though ↓ acidity)
  - ↓STI
- (Guatret, et al. 2012)

Per AARP:

- Plan to travel "at least to 80y"
- Barriers- cost (43%), health (34%), security fears (28%).

(AARP, 2017)

## **2. Boomer travel health**

Research on Boomer travel is woefully inadequate but this 2012 GeoSentinel report does highlight some of the diagnoses that are seen more commonly in the Boomer population of returning travelers. The AARP data shows that Boomers plan to keep traveling as long as the money is there, their health permits it, and security is not a concern.

- Departure date? Duration?
- Co-morbidities: stable?
- Prior VTE?
- Dental health
- Polypharmacy
- Sexuality
- Exposures: sick persons, animals, salons
- Lessons from other trips?
- Future travel plans?



### 3. Boomer assessment for SEAsia

Here are some important questions to always include in the pre-travel assessment of this group. A SEAsia destination usually involves a very long flight- sometimes more than 20 hours. Any history of VTE must be assessed, and if reported a referral to a vascular specialist may be warranted. Please do include questions and counseling around sexuality and do not rule out pregnancy without knowing a woman has had 13 months without menses. Co-morbidities- blood pressure, Afib, RA, etc- should be stable before undertaking a trip this far from their U.S. primary care provider or specialist. Boomers should not be in the midst of interventional dental work- implants and the like. Be sure to ask about all drugs- Rx and OTC as well as herbal and check for any contraindications with travel meds for this journey such as malaria medications, TD antibiotics, etc. With more disposable income Boomers may be staying at 4 or 5 star accommodations that may provide a sometimes false sense of protection from some of the typical risks of this region. They still need to understand the bloodborne pathogen risks of manicures, potential dietary hazards of cut fruit, and the possibility of mosquito exposures with very elaborate but open-to the outdoor resort rooms.

### **Evaluate capacity:**

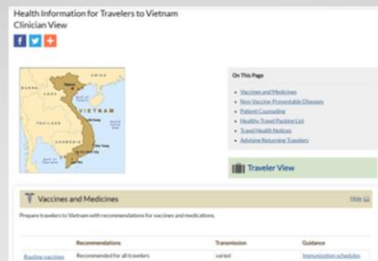
- Sensory losses?
- CVD- see PCP for evaluation (50% all travel-related illness and most deaths)
- Muscle strength, stamina?
- Urinary issues?
- Any cognition, psychological issues?
- Planned activities: hiking, etc.
- Need for Fitness-to-travel evaluation?



### **3. Boomer assessment for SEAsia**

Boomers will often come in earlier for their pre-travel care than other travel groups (e.g., students, business) so the THN may have the time needed to evaluate capacity if needed and communicate with primary care providers if the assessment raises issues about fitness to travel to this world region. This slide has some key areas for your attention.

- Search engines don't highlight Boomers
- CDC offers no older traveler category



Where are you going?  
 Vietnam

What kind of traveler are you?  
 (optional)

☐ Traveling with Children

☐ Chronic Disease

☐ Cruise Ship

☐ Extended Stay/Study Abroad

☐ Immune-Compromised Travelers

☐ Pregnant Women

☐ Mission/Disaster Relief

☐ Visiting Friends or Family

Go

## Boomer itinerary search

Although CDC and other commercial database resources highlight special issues for some travelers, such as women who are pregnant and cruise passengers, Boomer issues are not routinely addressed. THNs will need to access information about this travel population in other ways. This is one of the reasons this presentation was requested and developed.

While CDC and commercial databases may not identify Boomer issues, many tour companies do now provide guidance for judging the physical requirements of a trip:

- Tours are graded 1 to 10 for activity level
- Others mention # of steps or # of miles walking each day
- Some mention uneven pavements, cobble stones

As one example, a tour to the California Rose Parade says in the brochure:

"Participants can anticipate to sit on backless bleacher seats for up to 5 hours in the Pasadena sun"

## Tour Guidance

Increasingly tour companies provide information in their brochures to alert travelers to potential issues for walking or sitting. Boomers with musculoskeletal conditions or issues of fatigue can find these explanations helpful when selecting a tour. Cruises, of course have always been very popular with an older travel population but keep in mind motion sickness, risk of falls and fractures with steep ship stairs or choppy seas, possibility of norovirus outbreaks. While cruises have medical personnel on board, they are not floating pharmacies so passengers should always carry an extra supply of all meds.

## Opportunity to Update Immunizations

- Immunization Records- often absent
- ↓Waning immunity ↓Vaccine efficacy- spotty data
- Provide Catch up Routine Vaccines prn
- Provide Boosters prn (Tdap)
- MMR, Varicella (birthdate protected 1957, 1980)
- **\*Flu, Shingles, Pneumococcal**

(Keystone, et al. 2018)

\*offer high dose, if your clinic carries that formulation

## Immunizations for SEAsia



Not surprisingly, Boomers often lack up-to-date immunization records. They are a generation that may need to change primary care providers due to changes in insurance, including Medicare coverage. THNs are familiar with this challenge for almost every traveling adult post college. The issue also arises as to vaccine efficacy in persons over age 60. Most vaccine clinical trials have that age as a cut off and while we offer these vaccines through the lifespan, the data about efficacy may be sparse or lacking, especially for some of the travel vaccines that are infrequently offered / needed. Boomers often need Tdap boosters and less than 25% have received their Hepatitis A series unless they have traveled to risk areas previously. Most Boomers age out for MMR and Varicella. THNs caring for this population will want to educate and provide influenza, shingles and the two pneumococcal vaccines as may be needed. Although most U.S. Boomers have received many vaccines in the past they may have questions about vaccination value given current anti-vaxx messaging. Be sure to use this opportunity to reinforce the importance of immunizations. Also the safety of receiving more than one vaccine at a visit as some primary care providers now space out injections for insurance purposes.

## Boomer Vaccine Efficacy:

- Hep A: ↑ morbidity; 2 doses→97% vs 1 dose 65% seroprotection
- Typhoid: not tested > 60 yo
- Hep B series: ↑ risk for medical care in this group
- Rabies pre-exposure series? (\$\$\$/ consider travel assistance insurance option)
- JE: very rare risk; if needed- access Imojev abroad, 1 dose, <\$100, longer duration

(Keystone, et al. 2018)



## Immunizations for SEAsia

On this slide you will see some comments from Jay Keystone regarding vaccine efficacy in the older traveler (which includes all ages 55+). THNs now know that rabies and JE vaccines are available in Asia at much lower costs and some have other distinct advantages over U.S. options (Imojev for example). To locate a clinic offering these vaccines a THN can use the ISTM Global Clinic Directory. A recent family of four biking through South Korea for six weeks obtained Imojev for the whole family at an ISTM clinic in Seoul for \$95 per traveler.

- Long flights: VTE risk, anxiety/ stressors, jet lag
- MVAs: scooters, traffic, noise, morbidity & mortality
- Heat, humidity- dehydration, fungal infections
- Sun: sun protection important (↑skin cancers in Boomers)
- Air pollution: impact on cardiac/ respiratory
- Vectors: DEET, permethrin not age influenced
- Malaria- Malarone; ↓ drug interactions
- Fever: may present with ↓ temp; follow-up indicated

## Counseling Boomers

This slide highlights some of the priority counseling points for known health and safety risks for SEAsia travel.



- Management of co-morbidities
- Fatigue
- Constipation
- Medications: interactions, adequate supply
- Mobility: ↑fall risk
- Cognition & Psych: poor sleeping, culture effects
- Insurance: consider all 3 kinds (anticipate ↑premium cost)
- Medical access: provide *identified* sources prn
- Medical kit / medical record in cloud
- "Contact Card" PCP, emergency #, embassy, etc.

## Counseling Boomers: all trips

This slide highlights additional areas for counseling that are important for Boomers to this region. If these travelers have health issues then they may want to consider purchasing not only travel assistance insurance, but also trip cancellation and medical coverage insurance for costs abroad. If they use Medicare as their primary insurance, it does not apply internationally. Consider offering large print handouts for some patients and extending visit time to allow for more conversations: Boomers usually have loads of travel stories to share 😊

*Remember it could be horses, not zebras*

Fever & other s/s may present differently  
Boomers at risk for ↑ severity, complications



## Post-travel considerations

Post-travel Boomers may present with fewer symptoms or different symptoms, such as a lower temp fever. Also THNs must r/o that the health issue is not related to this trip...

*"The aim for clinicians is to maintain what is still working well, offer support where body and mind are a little worn out, and provide treatment for medical conditions where required."*

*I. Bauer*



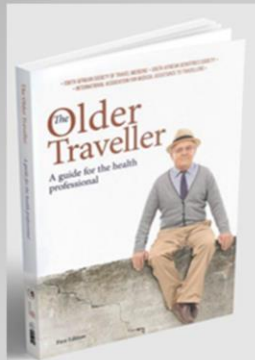
## Supporting the traveling Boomer

Excellent advice for THNs! We can add much to the success of a Boomer trip.

## Need for ↑↑ Boomer specific travel research

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- Schlaudecker et al. Keeping older patients healthy and safe as they travel. *J of Fam Prac* 2013; 62(1): 16-23.
- CDC *Health Information for International Travel* (Yellow Book) Chapter 8; 2020

## References



## Two Recommended Resources: Provider & Traveler @ [www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)

IAMAT publishes two soft cover books that are excellent resources for this population of travelers. The *Older Traveller* has many excellent chapters that address: *Healthy Travel* is a new, small companion text meant for the traveler.



**Questions?**

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I hope this presentation has provided you with some helpful information for a population of travelers who many of you will see more and more in your clinic. I welcome your questions. Gail Rosselot