

# Wilderness Physician Course

## WEMSI-International

The Wilderness Emergency Medical Services' Institute (WEMSI) had its roots in the USA and made the jump to Ireland in 1997. Since then we have trained more than 750 students and have grown and evolved to become WEMSI-International. We now run courses annually in Ireland and Scotland, and have also provided training in Denmark.

WEMSI-International is a not-for-profit academic organisation; we are volunteers who give our time freely. Our training faculty are a highly experienced team from diverse backgrounds, united by a passion for education and the outdoors. The faculty includes doctors, nurses, paramedics, international mountain guides, Scottish mountain rescue, expedition medics, pilots, cave rescuers, outdoor instructors, as well as British and Danish military. We are drawn from Canada, Denmark, England, Ireland, Kenya, Scotland and the USA. All of our faculty are required to be currently active in wilderness medicine.

All of our courses have a reputation for having experienced, approachable instructors, plenty of hands-on practice, high-fidelity patient simulation and a practical 'real-world' approach to patient care and evacuation. We believe that *principles* and *preferences*, not protocols, should guide our care. This is vital in the wilderness, where it is impossible to apply set protocols to all situations.

For further information about WEMSI-International, or any of our courses, please refer to the 'useful websites' section, below.

For general administrative information about the WP course, please contact Glenmore Lodge (e-mail: [enquiries@glenmorelodge.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@glenmorelodge.org.uk) or telephone: 01479 861256).

To apply for a place a course, please complete the application form (below) and e-mail it to WEMSI-International (e-mail: [wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org](mailto:wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org)).

## The Course

The Wilderness Physician (WP) course is the longest, most rigorous wilderness medical course for doctors in Europe. The course is certified by the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

The WP course runs intertwined with the Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT) course in order to promote learning and the development of close working relationships. Successful WP candidates also receive WEMT certificates. Together, the qualifications are certified for 70 hours of professional training, but in reality there are over 80 hours of training in the course of the week.

The WP component of the course is delivered by faculty doctors from diverse specialities, who are actively involved in rural, expedition and military medicine, as well as cave, mountain and ski rescue. All our doctors are experienced training providers. The pace of the course is quite intense, running from early morning to late evening each day over 8 days from Sunday evening to the following Sunday morning. Having said that, we manage to squeeze in a party at the end of the course!

The WP course is aimed at physicians who may be responsible for delivering or supervising advanced level medical and trauma care in remote environments, anywhere in the world. This course goes further than advanced first aid and, indeed, there is little in the way of basic skills training (e.g. bandaging) in the curriculum – we need you to know the basics already. As well as providing a great deal of practical hands-on training, the WP course equips students with the skills to work in - or remotely support - rescue teams anywhere in the world.

Training focuses on patient assessment, treatment *principles* and management of patients and incidents, rather than the traditional protocols associated with first aid. A thorough understanding of *principles* enables students to interpret guidance and adapt the care they provide to each individual situation and environment. Practitioners are engaged to provide patient management that is both practical and advanced. In summary, the diverse nature of the wilderness requirements dictate that a '*principles, not protocols*' approach serves patients and providers best. Training is delivered through presentations, workshops, group tasks, daily practical scenarios and a major field exercise at the end of the course.

At the beginning of the course, each student is allocated a member of the faculty as a mentor. All mentors are experienced trainers whose role is to act as a guide or coach on any aspect of the course that the student needs help with.

For many WP students, a valuable part of the course is meeting other doctors interested in wilderness medicine. This provides a peer-support and education network that is crucial in what is a newly emerging speciality of medicine. There is ample time for discussion of the rewards, opportunities, frustrations and difficulties of working in wilderness medicine.

The WP course includes practical and written (multiple choice question) examination, as required by the Royal College. Candidates have traditionally performed extremely well on these assessments using the knowledge and skills they have learned through the week.

## **Pre-Course Requirements**

As a minimum requirement, we ask that WP students have completed a medical degree, i.e. are doctors of medicine. Beyond this minimum, we understand that students come from a variety of training backgrounds and bring a wealth of training and medical experience with them to the course.

Healthcare professionals from other disciplines are encouraged to consider the WEMT course.

All applicants are requested to complete the application form (below) and e-mail it to:  
[wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org](mailto:wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org)

Each applicant will be contacted by one of the faculty to discuss their prior experience before their place is confirmed. If you have any doubts about the suitability of your experience or which course to choose, then please contact us for guidance.

## **Syllabus**

The WP course has its own syllabus, as well as benefiting from parts of the WEMT course. This provides comprehensive coverage of the field of wilderness medicine, whilst providing frequent opportunities for hands-on practice and team work under difficult conditions.

We modify and improve the course annually in response to new developments and feedback from our students. The course currently includes:

### **WP topics:**

- building relationship with field providers
- providing remote care
- direct and indirect medical supervision
- team working
- the structure of rescues
- equipment
- hands-on field care
- introduction to WP
- legal issues
- pharmacology in the wilderness
- real case studies
- tough calls: CPR and death
- use of radios and other communication tools

### **Practical skills:**

- advanced airways
- casting fractures
- patient movement and handling
- packaging & transport
- cleaning & closing wounds
- helmet removal
- inhalers
- long term care issues
- major haemorrhage control
- measuring vital signs
- nail trephining
- reduction of dislocations
- ring removal
- splinting
- taping sprains
- tourniquets

### **WEMT topics:**

- altitude illness
- bites & stings
- burns
- case studies in wilderness casualty assessment
- rescue
- cold disorders
- communications
- crush injuries
- death & dying
- drowning
- expedition mental health
- heat illness
- introduction to WEMSI
- lightning
- major incidents
- management of pain
- medical problems
- neck injuries
- neurological examination and practical
- orthopaedics
- patient assessment
- pharmacology
- principles of general medicine
- surgical problems
- thermoregulation
- wilderness trauma

## **Equipment Lists**

Glenmore Lodge can supply:

basic waterproof jackets and trousers  
leather walking boots  
helmets  
day & expedition backpacks

Equipment you need to bring yourself or obtain from the Lodge:

- alarm clock
- any medications that you are on
- box or bag for packed lunch.
- cash/cards for use at the bar or shop
- climbing helmet
- fleece/insulated jacket
- general trekking trousers are recommended (not jeans)
- hat & gloves\*
- head torch with spare batteries\*
- individual first aid kit
- informal clothing for leisure wear, including indoor footwear
- knife
- lip salve
- notepad and pens
- outdoor socks – several pairs
- personal toiletries & medications (towels are provided)
- snacks
- swimming costume
- suncream – you just never know!\*
- trainers
- vacuum flask & water bottle\*
- warm outdoor wear
- waterproof bag to protect contents of rucksack
- waterproof jacket
- waterproof trousers
- waterproof walking boots
- whistle

(\* available for purchase in the Glenmore Lodge shop, subject to availability)

Glenmore Lodge also has a pool, sauna, gym & climbing wall - so don't forget your swimming/gym/climbing kit!

## Course Timings

### Arrive (Sunday):

1700 hrs	Registration
1800 hrs	Introduction to WEMSI-International
1900 hrs	Dinner
2000 hrs	Team tasks

### Departure (Sunday):

By 1000 hrs	Checkout
Mid-morning	Depart

Breakfast and dinner are hot meals; lunch is a light meal or packed meal if in the field.

## Essential Reading

To prepare before for the WEMT course and for reference on the course you will need to buy the following two books:

### **1. Wilderness Medical Society: Practice Guidelines for Wilderness Emergency Care (5th Edition)**

by William W. Forgey, 5th Edition August 2006, 136 pages  
ISBN-10: 0762741023 or ISBN-13: 978-0762741021

These practice guidelines are the official statement of the Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) on the management of wilderness-related trauma, illness, and environmental injury. Prepared by twenty-three contributors and reviewed by the WMS panel of expert reviewers, this book discusses treatment goals for twenty-four basic subjects, including: wilderness evacuation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, submersion, head and spinal injuries, orthopaedic injuries, high-altitude illness, hypothermia, field water disinfection, wild animal attacks, tick-transmitted diseases, immunisations, venomation.

### **2. Field Guide to Wilderness Medicine (3rd Edition)**

by Paul S. Auerbach, 3rd Edition July 2008, 944 pages  
ISBN 13: 9781416046981 or ISBN 10: 1416046984

This is the condensed version of the large and comprehensive Wilderness Medicine 5th Edition, 2336 page book. The Field guide is in an A5 format and still extends to 944 pages packed full of detailed theory and good practical solutions to wilderness medical challenges.

## Useful Websites

### **WEMSI-International**

[www.WEMSI-international.org](http://www.WEMSI-international.org)

### **WEMSI-International's academic site**

[www.wildmedic.org](http://www.wildmedic.org)

### **Glenmore Lodge**

[www.glenmorelodge.org.uk](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk)

### **WP course**

[www.glenmorelodge.org.uk/course-mountainrescue-qualifications-display.asp?course\\_id=104](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk/course-mountainrescue-qualifications-display.asp?course_id=104)

### **BBC Adventure Show documentary on the WEMT course**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIcRuk\\_F8P8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIcRuk_F8P8)

### **Photographs from previous courses**

[www.flickr.com/photos/wemsi-europe](http://www.flickr.com/photos/wemsi-europe)

## **Application Form**

Before an applicant is able to book a place on the WP course, they must have filled out an application form (see below) and been approved by WEMSI-International. Please send your completed application forms to: [wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org](mailto:wemsi-vetting@wildmedic.org)

Once we receive your report, a member of the teaching faculty will contact you to discuss your application and answer any questions you may have.

On the course, the information supplied will be made available to the faculty and staff to facilitate your learning.

***We hope to see you on the course!***

***Best wishes,***

***WEMSI-International***



## Wilderness Physician Course Application Form

**Name:**

**Contact telephone number:**

**1. Medical knowledge and previous courses/training:**

**2. Medical/First Aid experience:**

**3. Outdoor experience/foreign trips:**

**4. Reason for wanting to attend:**

**5. Any other comments:**