

**ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION FOR THE IOM FORM:  
“Request for a Medical Report and Assessment of Travel Fitness”**

**A SIM flight is not only the organization of a flight ticket, it's the organization of a permanent voluntary return.**

**BACKGROUND**

Over the past several years, the number of vulnerable persons participating in IOM voluntary return programs, particularly in Europe, has significantly increased. Accordingly, IOM's Migration Health Division (MHD) and Migration Protection and Assistance Unit (MPA), which oversees IOM's voluntary return programs, have taken measures to ensure that migrants with health needs returning under the auspices of the Organization do so in a safe, dignified manner and that their health needs are addressed throughout the return process. To this end, institutional guidelines on the return of migrants with health needs have been established, of which the *Request for a Medical Report and Assessment of Travel Fitness* form is part.

The return travel of migrants with health needs may be associated with increased risks, due to long journeys, stressful situations or difficult travel conditions (such as prolonged periods of sitting and low cabin pressure during air travel, among others), which, in combination with their already affected health, can further deteriorate their condition.

IOM's standard practice is to individually assess the cases of returnees with known health needs, taking into account various factors that can impact the return, such as: an individual's ability to make an informed and competent decision; the feasibility of a migrant's return based on medical factors (that is, whether the return travel would exacerbate the migrant's health condition and/or whether the migrant's health condition would deteriorate upon arrival as a direct result of the return); the migrant's fitness to travel and travel health needs (for example, the need for a medical escort, supply of medication, wheelchair, etc.); and the availability and accessibility of appropriate post-arrival health assistance, including health-related reintegration assistance.

IOM Bern, in close cooperation with swissREPAT/SEM, has adapted the *Request for a Medical Report and Assessment of Travel Fitness* form to the needs of the Swiss program, SIM (swissREPAT-IOM movements), in a consultative process involving all return counselors. Whenever possible, IOM Bern has incorporated the feedback received into the form before sending out the definitive version.

**WHAT IS NEW?**

1. IOM Bern has **incorporated all existing documents**, as well as frequently asked questions, into one document (former ATF Form, letter for the doctors, additional questionnaires for specific cases, etc.)
2. The **purpose of the *Request for a Medical Report and Assessment of Travel Fitness* form** is to increase the efficiency of the return process by gathering all required information during the initial stage of the return process for a migrant with health needs to avoid subsequent additional exchanges between IOM, the return counselor and the treating physician, which may be seen as complicated and time-consuming.
3. **Vital signs** provide important information for IOM's AVRR medical focal points, who review medical cases remotely. While the inclusion of vital signs is encouraged for all returnees with health needs, they are requested, at a minimum, for those patients with conditions that may be expected to affect vital signs (please see the form for details); likewise, oxygen saturation is

requested, at a minimum, for patients with conditions that may be expected to affect oxygen saturation (please see the form for details).

4. Additionally to the questions that have been already asked in the former questionnaire «ATF», IOM asks the treating physician to provide the vital signs. Since a few months, IOM doctors ask for this information for almost all cases. The vital signs give the IOM doctors an important overview on the general health condition of the migrant. As the IOM doctor assesses the health of the migrants without personally seeing them, this information can be crucial in order to understand the general health condition of the migrant. As an example: a migrant can suffer from an important medical condition but as she/he is in a good general health state, no escort is needed.

5. Two sentences have been added:

a) “Please note that the airline might request another medical form to be filled out before the flight; IOM Bern will transfer the form to you if it is needed. “

*Rationale:* We consider this to be important information for your awareness. This is beyond IOM’s control, as airlines have their own procedures for clearing medical cases.

b) “For questions 1, 2 and 3, please note that IOM physicians will base their decision on the treating physician’s recommendation, as well as on IOM standards.”

*Rationale:* It is important to inform the treating physician. As IOM is responsible for the migrant during his or her journey, IOM takes all information from the treating physician(s) into consideration, and also ensures coherence with its institutional standards for movements. This does, in any case, not question the competency of the treating physician.

#### **DO WE NEED THIS REPORT FOR ALL MIGRANTS?**

The answer is: NO. The target group has not changed.

A completed form is required for all persons under medical treatment or regularly taking medication, as well as for migrants with:

- a. History of recent (within the last year) hospitalization;
- b. Mental disorders;
- c. Past (within the last five years) or current treatment for cancer;
- d. History of heart disease/surgery;
- e. History of lung diseases/asthma
- f. History of seizures or stroke;
- g. Dialysis;
- h. Significant mobility problems;
- i. Other disabilities requiring assistance with the activities of daily living;
- j. Terminal stage of diseases;
- k. Medical conditions requiring in-flight injections (e.g. diabetes on insulin);
- l. Medical conditions requiring special travel arrangements (e.g. medical escort, wheelchair, stretcher, oxygen, catheters, etc.);
- m. Any other conditions where there are doubts as to the individual’s fitness for travel or need for special travel arrangements.

For all questions, feedback, etc. please do not hesitate to contact IOM Bern:

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