September 27, 2021

COVID-19 variants continue to spread rapidly and, while we know that travelers who are fully vaccinated reduce their risk of suffering severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19, we still do not know the durability of the current vaccines and cannot, with confidence, rely on vaccines to ensure protection against infection from COVID-19 variants.

Travelers who become ill with COVID-19 or another illness may not be able to access health care, at least not the level of care available in Chapel Hill.

International travel remains significantly disrupted with international flights still well below pre-pandemic levels. The ever-changing patchwork of border restrictions and testing/quarantine requirements create uncertainty for travelers and may result in personnel being stranded.

As deans and other weigh the required certification that the benefits to UNC of proposed international travel exceed the risks, the elevated risks of international travel must be front and center in making judgments.

In practical terms, this means that travel to destinations of concern should, in many cases, be delayed or deferred. The benefits to UNC and beyond of travel for such purposes as conducting essential humanitarian activities, engaging in training essential to UNC’s mission, COVID-19 vaccine or treatment trials or other life-saving activities may receive special consideration.