



A Road Less Travelled

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Difficult road patrols, PNG. See page 2

Upcoming events:

- Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress in Sydney, Australia, 20-24 March 2011.
- Applications due for Diabetes Certificate at PEI for 2011.
- Seven subspecialists to visit PEI in 2011
- New eye clinic for Dili, Timor-Leste, under construction
- March graduation and nurses workshop for PNG classes of 2010.

Regional Training Facility Opens New Doors

The Pacific's regional eye care training facility, the Pacific Eye Institute, will welcome its 2011 students to a brand new facility in Suva, Fiji in January.

The new building, which brings the Pacific Eye Institute and CWM Hospital facilities under one roof, was funded by AusAID and the

New Zealand Aid Programme through the Fred Hollows Foundation New Zealand.

The NZ\$3.3m building, which is specially designed for disabled access, boasts a clinic wing for refraction and outpatients, a surgical wing with two large two-patient theatres, administrative offices and an

academic wing complete with lecture theatres, resource centre and computer lab.

The new facility was blessed in a ceremony on 30 November. PEI director Dr John Szetu gave a vote of thanks to all of those involved in making this long-standing dream a reality. *See photos on page 8.*

New Eye Clinic for West New Britain, PNG



Fully-equipped theatre in the new eye clinic

The 14th of October 2010 was World Sight Day, and a cause for much celebration at the Kimbe Eye Clinic.

This was the grand opening of the Eye Clinic at Kimbe Gen-

eral Hospital, the result of a partnership between the West New Britain (WNB) Provincial government, the hospital, the Fred Hollows Foundation NZ (FHFNZ) and New Britain Palm Oil.

The creation of the clinic provides a central hub for a province wide eye care program which has been initiated by Ophthalmic Nurse, Lindsay Dewhurst. Lindsay works for FHFNZ and has been instrumental in drawing together the technical expertise of the Foundation, recruiting medical staff, training nurses in eye care, finding a local doctor to be trained in Ophthalmology, training rural health workers in eye care, co-ordinating eye nurses in the province on

rural surgical outreach, raising funds for the building of the clinic and much more.

Since 1997 FHFNZ has trained eight WNB nurses in the Postgraduate Diploma in Eye Care, in partnership with Divine Word University in Madang. Four of those nurses now work in the Kimbe Eye Clinic, while the others work in Catholic health centres and the rural community clinics of local palm oil companies.

Every month, the West New Britain eye team comes together and travels into a rural area (usually on the Provincial Government vessel, MV Artemis) to deliver surgical services and to provide affordable spectacles.

The celebration was especially poignant for Drs Mark Wood and Robert Ko. In 2010 Dr Ko took up a scholarship from FHFNZ to study Ophthalmology at the Pacific Eye Institute in Suva. In November, Dr Ko passed his exams, graduating with a Diploma in Ophthalmology from the University of Papua New Guinea, and took up a new position as an eye doctor in the Kimbe General Hospital. Dr Ko's mentor, Dr Mark Wood, is delighted with the achievements in WNB:

"I am very pleased to see the progression of all the eye care staff in the province. I have enjoyed working with the team and look forward to my remaining three months

RANZCO : A Highlight for Eight Pacific Doctors

The 2010 RANZCO meeting in Adelaide was informative and exciting. A total of 3 PEI ophthalmologists (Drs Szetu, Konstanze and Biu), 6 Diploma students (3 from Fiji-Vara, Ana and Tarai, Teariki from Cook Is, Alex and Robert from PNG) and 2 Masters students (Shereen and Claude) attended. This is probably the biggest team ever from the Pacific to attend RANZCO. The sessions covered a variety of clinical topics with emphasis on newer treatments and clinical management.

The FHFNZ /PEI Diabetes program and the PGCDEC course were presented both as oral and poster presentations. Dr Luisa also presented the Lautoka diabetes program. Professor Hugh Taylor of Melbourne was pleased with the work done at PEI especially with the new Diabetes Screening and Management

Guidelines for use in the Pacific Islands.

It was a great opportunity to inform others of the training of mid-level personnel conducted at PEI and the new diabetes guidelines for use by all Pacific island ophthalmologists.

I'm sure we all learnt something new. It was a good exposure to all of us especially to those attending for the first time. We are most grateful to



FHFNZ-funded delegates to RANZCO 2010, Adelaide, Australia

FHFNZ for making this educational trip possible. A big thank you to professor Clover (it was her persistence to the organizers that we were able

to make oral presentations as well) and Renee for her input in the preparation of both posters. - Dr Biu Sikivou

*Brought in on a stretcher**Sight restoring surgery**Heading home; a new outlook on the world*

Difficult Rural Patrols—A Challenging Experience

Nuku District in the Sandaun Province would be similar to most rural areas in PNG where poor infrastructure developments can be a hindrance not only to health services but to other services as well. Air travel is very expensive and the highway becomes so bad during the rainy season. The Nuku health facility needed major maintenance and equipment replenishing, which is typical of health facilities in the remotes areas. But the health workers there are completely committed to

providing care to their local people.

A joint outreach visit was undertaken this year in partnership with the Vanimo medical team (medical officers, ATO, dental therapist, lab technician, OT nurses, a logistics officer & a driver); the Wewak team (surgical team & our eye team); and the Callan team to screen and line up cases and assist in surgery as well.

The roads were so bad that fragile equipment had to be

moved in and returned by a chartered plane and a hired vehicle was needed for 10 days, making this a very expensive exercise.

The surgical team used the mini theatre while our team used the smaller MCH clinic next door, improvising with what was available in very humid conditions.

Despite all the hardships and expense incurred, many people had their surgical problems operated on and the lab technician arranged cross

matched blood as well, the medical patients were treated, dental patients smiled as they went away and blind patients were able to see.

The remarkable moment for the Eye team was having an old man who had been blind for 4 years being brought in on a stretcher after a day of walking. Following surgery the same man was able to see to walk himself home.

Difficult Rural Outreaches can sometimes test our faith!

- David Pahau (Wewak)

*Korean & NRH teams*

Solomon Islands, like other island countries in the region, benefits enormously from visiting eye specialist teams.

In December 2009 an eye team from South Korea operated on 62 cataract patients at the National Referral Hospital. The visit was a first for the Korean eye team in the Solomon Islands. The team leader was Dr. Choi (an ophthalmologist) and he was accompanied by two OT nurses, an anesthetic nurse, two OT

recovery nurses, four OT aides and several translators.

Generally cataract surgery is offered as elective surgery using the standard extra-capsular cataract extraction (ECCE). Dr.

Choi performed phacoemulsification cataract surgery on all the 62 patients. Each surgery took 10 to 15 minutes. Most cataracts were dense with hand movement (HM) vision. Corneal decompensation was noted as a common complication, which cleared in 2 days post-op. Visual outcome was excellent in 59 patients who subsequently had 6/6 vision at one week post-op. Three patients had poor vision post op due to patient selection.

Cataract patient turnout was

expected to be 100, however due to the holiday season of December, most patients were not able to come to the National Referral Hospital for this tour.

The Korean eye team visit provided a first-hand experience of phaco cataract surgery for the training registrar. The phaco machine used was a Sovereign Compact from Advance Medical Optics (AMO). The National Referral Hospital eye nurses also had the opportunity to learn from their Korean counterparts.

The visit was organised jointly by the Assembly of God

Agape Church, the Korean Consul to the Solomon Islands and the First Lady Charity group.

Such was the success of this tour, it is hoped that the Korean Eye team will be able to perform consecutive visits to Solomon Islands.

- Dr Claude Posala

*Dr Choi & team*

The Rotary Host Program, my AAO Experience, San Francisco



With Ophthalmology Residents, Medical University of South Carolina

I'd like to take this opportunity to share with all our colleagues on this lifetime experience to be one of the guests sponsored by the Rotary Host Program to attend the AAO annual meeting in San Francisco (California). I'd like to thank Prof Richard Le Mesurier (Regional Chairman – IAPB Western Pacific) for his recommendations to the Rotary Host Program and the AAO in giving one of the Pacific Islanders this lifetime privilege to attend the AAO and see the USA.

I accepted the invitation and preparations for the US visa, air travel etc. began almost 6 – 8 months before my departure. It was the committed hard work of Mrs Wendy Ovaitt (Manager International Outreach - AAO) that got the whole trip organised. I departed Port Moresby on the 14/10/09 and had so many connections (Sydney/ Hawaii/ Los Angeles/Texas/ Georgia) it took me 48 hrs of travel. It was a real experience for me to be in this part of a very developed country like America.

I finally arrived at my final destination in Savannah (Georgia) where for the first time I met Dr Baxter McLendon my host ophthalmologist. We then travelled

by road to Brunson in South Carolina, where he lives with his wife Susan. The McClendons were a very nice couple who welcomed me into their home and really took good care of me. Baxter had arranged for me a short attachment with a corneal and a vitreo-retinal specialist. I learnt a lot from this short visit and got exposed to the very high standard of practice in ophthalmology in terms of training, consultations and the high-tech investigative methods



The Rotary Club Guests 2009

which we lack in the Pacific as well as the management of different eye cases.

I was asked to speak to my sponsors (the Beaufort Rotary Club Members in South Carolina) on the practice of ophthalmology in PNG and of course as a developing country in the Pacific which has a lot of challenges to provide eye care services to our people. They were shocked at the hardships we face but yet give our best with what's available.

After a week in South Carolina I flew out with Dr McLendon to San Francisco for the AAO meeting. The city is so big and the AAO was convened in three separate

huge halls in the Muscone Convention Centre. There were thousands of participants from all over the world. That was when we met Dr Ken Tuck (chairman of the AAO's Rotary Club Host) and the other Rotary Club Guests from other developing countries (Central Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan & Iraq).

Mrs Ovaitt had pre registered us for our interested courses, lectures and wet labs. We learnt a lot from these various sessions. An International Ophthalmology session was conducted and I had the privi-

with nightly dinners as well and it was all fun meeting other colleagues and sharing experiences and socio - cultural values.

After the meeting we had the opportunity to go sightseeing over the famous Golden Gate Bridge and to see the Alcatraz Island Prison as well as go riding on the Cables cars around San Francisco city. A visit to the NAPA valley winery in Oakland over the Golden Gate Bridge was so spectacular. The ride on the Cable cars around San Francisco's CBD was quite an experience. Unfortunately, like all good things in life, there is always an ending. It was sad to farewell the new friends we'd just met but we all had to return to our homes. I returned to PNG on the 31st of October 2009.

I thank Dr Richard Le Mesurier, Dr Baxter McLendon and Mrs Susan McLendon, Dr Ken Tuck, Dr David Park II, Mrs Wendy Ovaitt, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and The Rotary Club of Beaufort South Carolina for this lifetime opportunity. Also the Wewak General Hospital Management to grant my release from duty for this trip to the United States.

Thank you very much.

- David Pahau

lege to meet our senior Australian colleagues, namely Prof Hugh Taylor and Prof Richard Le Mesurier. The exhibitions were so massive from suppliers all over the world displaying their products in three separate halls that there was plenty to see and get around to learn from. It was also an opportunity to make purchases of text books and surgical instruments. There were special interest group meetings



Dr Baxter McLendon & Family – Host

Tackling an epidemic of avoidable blindness



Savelina Veamatahau

WHO scholarship student Savelina Veamatahau completed the Post-graduate Certificate in Diabetes Eye Care in Suva in June 2010. We caught up with Savelina at the 2010 Pacific Regional Eye Care Conference half way through her year studying towards the Post-graduate Diploma in Eye Care.

Savelina had been working in the Eye Department at Vaiola Hospital in Nuku-alofa since 2002 and more recently had been joining the general diabetes team on visits to outer islands to do screening for diabetes eye disease. She said that there was no-one with adequate knowledge to do this job effectively, nor to use the

retinal camera, which had been available in the hospital since 2008.

“Before the training I would see someone’s retina had changes from diabetes eye disease but I could not accurately assess the level or the correct time to send them to the doctor,” she said.



Savelina with her fellow graduates from the inaugural PGCDEC program

“I have learnt a lot taking this course; not just the anatomy and physiology but the skills of grading, when to refer, when to review and methods

to improve management of the service overall.”

Savelina said that the course included some tips that will be really helpful in managing people’s care. Recalls for example, are better managed by giving appointments than by asking patients to come back in a year’s time.

She said the trainees were taught the importance of including patients in managing their care and in working hard to provide a well-integrated diabetes service overall.

Being taught to use the Diabetes Retinal Screening, Grading and Management Guidelines for use in Pacific Island Nations was enormously helpful, she said.

“We always talk about integration in diabetes work—we must share with the physician, the dietitian and others to help the patient as a whole.

“If you say something else from the others, the patient gets confused and doesn’t know who to agree with. If you all give the same messages it works much better.”

“We need to work together because diabetes eye disease is increasing. We are in danger of developing a blind society from this disease.”

Record numbers for Pacific Eye Health Conference

The annual Pacific Regional Eye Health Conference and the Diabetes Eye Care and Professional Development Workshops were held in Suva, Fiji islands 21-24 June 2010. The week was attended by 77 eye care workers from eight Pacific Island countries, including a number from private practice and a contingent of students who were

part way through their studies at the Pacific Eye Institute.

The conference theme was “A quality approach to eye care in the Pacific” with local and international speakers addressing topics ranging from clinical audit and evidence-based medicine to guideline development and continuing professional devel-

opment.

The two workshop days provided opportunities for eye care workers to share their challenges and lessons and to further develop skills.

Conference presentations covered eye care, workforce and health system issues of importance to Pacific eye care providers, identified in 2009.

Savelina said she expected to be working at the diabetes clinic doing diabetes eye care full time when she returned to Tonga but hoped not to lose touch with the eye clinic.

“We must find a way to work together not just at the individual patient level but the community as a whole.”

“Diabetes eye disease is increasing and we need to do something. We are in danger of developing a blind society from this disease.”

O.N.E Network Available to PacEYES Members

Dear Colleague,

I am excited to announce that through a partnership with the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the Pacific Eye Institute is able to provide you with free access to the Academy's Ophthalmic News and Education (O.N.E.) Network. The O.N.E. Network is a powerful online educational resource that brings together the most clinically relevant content, news and tools from a variety of trusted sources for ophthalmologists worldwide.

The O.N.E. Network helps you maintain skills, get targeted information and keep

up to date with ...

- A broad array of current ophthalmic information and education,
- Tools for lifelong learning,
- Latest research in peer-reviewed publications,
- Precise clinical searches,
- Self-assessment tools to test your knowledge,
- A custom learning plan with automated reminders, and a
- Review of the standards of care with the Academy's library of practice guidelines.

You will receive an e-mail from the Academy with

instructions on how to access the O.N.E. Network.

To ensure that we are able to provide you with access, please make sure that we have your current e-mail address on file. If you would like to update your e-mail, please contact me at:

director@pacificeyinstitute.org

In the meantime, you can take a guided tour of the O.N.E. Network at this address:

<http://one.aao.org/Tutorials/>

[ONETutorial/player.html](#) and make sure you are able to locate and utilise the many valuable features and resources of the O.N.E. Network. It is an excellent way to get started.

We look forward to sharing the O.N.E. Network with you and hope you find it as valuable as we do!

Sincerely,
John Szetu
President
PacEYES



The Central Division Health Services, Fiji : Recent Revival of the Diabetes Care Program in Collaboration with PEI and FHFNZ



Dr Fischer explaining a patient's fundus photograph



Dr Sikivou applying laser

The 2009 Fiji Eye Health Survey has reported that the prevalence of diabetes among Fijians aged 40 years and over is approximately 43 per cent. To prevent unnecessary blindness in a Pacific Island with high and escalating prevalence of diabetes it was therefore imperative to re-establish a comprehensive screening and management program for diabetic retinopathy within the Health Divisions in collaboration with general diabetes services. The service is located in the central referral hospital in Suva within a centre encompassing comprehen-

sive diabetes care.

The new diabetes eye clinic was officially opened by the Minister for Health in October 2009. A nurse and a health professional were trained in New Zealand and at PEI in the screening and management of diabetic retinopathy utilizing the non-mydriatic digital retinal camera and implementing the Diabetes Retinal Screening, Grading and Referral Guidelines for the Pacific Islands. Two ophthalmologists established diabetes eye referral clinics and undertook a re-

fresh course in laser photocoagulation of retinopathy. Monthly mobile outreach services commenced in 2010 to highly frequented community diabetes clinics.

By May 2010, 1,623 patients were screened and 364 laser treatments undertaken. Outreach laser treatment commenced later in the year. This program, which is tailored for the needs of the Pacific Islands, needs to be replicated in other islands with comparably high prevalence rates of diabetes and a similar population structure. We acknowledge the support of World Diabetes Foundation, PEI, FHFNZ and MOH Fiji for making this possible.

- Dr Biu Sikivou



Drs and PGCDEC students

Graduates Swell the Ranks of Eye Care Workers

Newly qualified eye care workers have joined the Pacific workforce in significant numbers at the end of 2010, with the support of the Fred Hollows Foundation New Zealand.

The Pacific Eye Institute was proud to nominate 23 students for graduation this year; the largest group of graduates PEI has ever produced. At first Fiji National University

Vola, Mere Vosaki and Evivi Vulalima.

The Fiji National University (FNU) was founded in January this year bringing into a single university Fiji's existing tertiary institutions. PEI students took part in the FNU graduation ceremony as a part of the new FNU College of Medicine, Nursing and Health. Over 1500 students graduated from FNU colleges.



In Timor-Leste, 15 eye care workers graduated with a Diploma in Eye Care from the National Institute of Health Science Timor-Leste.

graduation ceremony held on the 3rd December, seven students received the inaugural Postgraduate Certificate in Diabetes Eye Care, 13 students received the Postgraduate Diploma in Eye Care (PGDEC) and four doctors received the Postgraduate Diploma in Ophthalmology (PGDO). Many PEI staff were present at the graduation ceremony to proudly celebrate with the 2010 graduands.

Thirteen of these graduates are going to be employed by the Ministry of Health in districts all around the country, while two graduates will remain in Dili to work with FHFNZ.

Congratulations to: Antonio Da Costa, Ana Paula Ximenes, Domingas Da Costa Fernandes, Domingas Maria

Moniz, Jatana Duarte Gomes, Ish Shah Conceicao Da Costa, Juvita Gusmao, Juvencia Da Silva Afonso, Laurinda Brigida Guterres, Lena S Fonseca, Norberta Da Costa Pereira, Rita Cardoso Lopes, Sebastiana Freitas Guterres, Teresinha Dos Reis Soares and Yovita Abuk Bere.

In PNG, Drs Robert Ko and Alex Mel will graduate with PGDO and Annie Kilepak with MMed

from the University of PNG in early 2011 while Ignatius Diumale, Joy Gul, Lucy Kaukesa, Regina Kean, Monica Manas, Christopher Paison, Christine Pangumen, Rocky Pure, Elizabeth Tobokom and Francis Yasaking will graduate with PGDEC from Divine Word University in Madang in March 2011.



Congratulations to: Bethany Aitoroi, Edwin Amel, Alvin Avikash, Susana Beladrokadroka, Dr Ana Cama, Luseane Esau, Dr TeAriki Faireka, Michael Hou, Anshu Krishna, Doreen Mala, Dr Varanise Naviri, Elizabeth Niulala, Ramila Patel, Dr Taraivini Rakabu, Judith Sade, Doreen Singh, Oge Soonafai, Monique Tahi, Ellen Thogo, Savelina Veamatahau, Losana

Several sub-committees of PacEYES were formed at the 2010 PacEYES AGM in Suva in June.

The Clinical Guidelines sub-committee, chaired by Dr Claude Posala, has already completed draft cataract guidelines and will begin work on guidelines for the management of anterior eye diseases in January 2011.

The Nurses' sub-committee, led by Sisters Kini and

Alumita, met in August and again this month to work on plans for a research project looking into the informed consent process prior to cataract surgery. An email invitation will be circulated to nurses in the new year inviting participation in the project.

A Continuing Professional Development sub-committee was also set up at the AGM and is chaired by Dr Tarai. The committee is working

with Dr Neil Murray, who chairs the RANZCO International Committee, to examine the RANZCO CPD framework as a starting point for a Pacific equivalent.

To keep updated on the work of the PacEYES sub-committees, financial members of PacEYES can join the Society's online discussion forum. For an invitation, please email the administrator: paceyessb@gmail.com

PacEYES Sub-committees Steam Ahead



Photographs courtesy of Matt Pearce