

A brief review of the RCPA Pathology Education Outreach Committee's recent work

Saturday 1 June 2024 (Pacific Island Forum at the Australasian IAP ASM
2024 in Brisbane)

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17/05/24



Introduction

- The RCPA Pathology Education Outreach Committee is involved in the development of pathology education and training in the Pacific and South-East Asian Countries.
- The current foci are Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Samoa, Kiribati and Tonga
 - but a significant number of Fellows are engaged in outreach programs in Vietnam, in South Asia (Nepal, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka) and in Indonesia and East Timor.
- Fellows undertake these activities voluntarily and most often are self-funded.
- RCPA is always looking for Fellows who would like to participate in these teaching and training programs.

Current Postgraduate Training Opportunities

Fiji - Pathology Postgraduate Diploma and Master Program

Principally designed to train Fijian nationals to meet local needs, the program is open to trainees from neighbouring Polynesian nations without financial support from FNU or the Fijian Government.

- *The College assists in the teaching and examination of the Pathology Postgraduate Diploma and Master Program at the Fiji National University (FNU) in Suva.*
- **PNG - UPNG M Med Pathology**
 - *College Fellows provide support in teaching and examination of the UPNG M Med Pathology – coordinated by John Ferguson.*
- **Both courses are academically oriented and institution based**

Australia Awards Fellowships successfully gained through RCPA in 2023-2024 (Round 18)

Country	Applicant	Host	Lab attachment dates	Comments
Fiji	Dr Rosalind Bolevakarua	AP with Dipti Talaulikar and Haematology with Daphne Loh Canberra Hospital	3/9/2023 - 11/11/2023	Australia Activities completed.
Kiribati	Dr Tiaeke Tewareka	Peter Earls and Svetalana Cherepanoff - St Vincent's Sydney, and Esther Myint - DHM	4/2/2024 - 27/4/2024	Australia Activities completed.
Vietnam	Dr Hoang Thien Dang and Dr Dac Quynh Anh Nguyen	David Roxby and Chris Hogan - Austin Pathology.	6/4/2024 - 27/6/2024	
Tonga	Dr Ilaisaane Fonohema and Dr Patrick Penitani	David Clift - ACL @ Geelong Hospital	I F - January to March 2024 P P - April to June 2024	

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DFAT Round 19 Australia Awards Fellowship Applications

- For Round 19 laboratory attachments, RCPA has put applications for:
 - PNG – 8 trainees
 - Samoa – 1 trainee
 - Sri Lanka – 1 trainee
- Outcome will be known by June.
- Seeking laboratories which can host overseas trainees for attachments for up to 3 months. NB: The award recipients may be seeking experience in or outside AP.

RCPA Pathology Update Education Outreach Grants to attend Pathology Update

- Every year, the RCPA funds four regional pathologists/trainees to attend the three-day ASM - *Pathology Update*. This year's recipients were:
 - Dr Anthony Amof - Papua New Guinea
 - Dr Sujan Sharma - Nepal
 - Dr Virislia Ciri - Fiji
 - Dr Fidri Manongga - Indonesia

RCPA Pathology Education Outreach Fellowship Foundation Grant – in 2023 this was awarded to David Roxby for “Developing local capacity for a sustainable laboratory and clinical Transfusion education and training program in Samoa: A pilot program for Transfusion education in the South Pacific”

Foundation Grants now open:

- **Pathology Education Outreach Fellowship Foundation Grants** - \$10,000 grant to advance and promote Pathology education and training and local capacity building in the South Pacific and South-East Asia region.
- **Sullivan Nicolaides Partnership Pathology Scholarship** - Doctor, trainee or scientist from Pacific Island for a 2-week attachment at a SNP laboratory in Australia.

- **Other Awards known to RCPA PEOC**
- **Medical Microbiology Post-graduate Diploma:**
Offered to those in regional countries who wish to update their diagnostic microbiology and infectious diseases knowledge – contact John Ferguson.
- **A “Pacific Island Forum” at the IAP Conference Brisbane in June**

Three Pathology registrars from PNG will be attend with the IAP Bursary

How you can help?

- We are always looking for funds to support our activities in the region.
 - **Please consider donating** (generously) to the RCPA Foundation Developing Communities Fellowship Grant for Fellows.
- **Undertake face to face pathology teaching** in Fiji and PNG or elsewhere in the region (even short term engagements are hugely helpful).
- **Consider mentoring trainees**, and supervising and assisting in laboratory capacity building (**in person or remotely**)
- **Provide on-line distance teaching.**
- **Provide pathology teaching resources:** there is a shortage of such resources in these countries.
- **By hosting** regional pathologists and trainees for **laboratory attachments** in Australia and New Zealand.

... and now for something
different

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A recognised imperative

- In late 2022 Secretaries for Development in all Australian embassies and High Commissions across the Pacific identified to DFAT that the critical impediment to providing stable improved medical services in these nations was the absence of local pathologists!
- The structure and funding of postgraduate training in Pathology virtually excludes trainees from outside PNG and Fiji.

Further impediments to progress

- Small work forces of one or two pathologists serving an entire nation, particularly in small medical communities, are vulnerable to many forms of compromise and are overloaded.
- Most Pacific Island nation pathologists work in comparative isolation and with little peer support and have no advocates for their work.

A “new” perspective on Postgraduate Pathology training?

- In April 2023 some of us were involved in ‘bidding’ for DFAT funding to establish a centrally directed and supervised remote learning model of PG Pathology education – a ‘Pacific Island College of Pathology’ - and to develop a mechanism and framework for internet based collaboration, (tele)diagnostic opinion and professional support.
- We were not successful BUT ...

Unexpected progress

- I believed these proposals were the best option for training and support in the South West Pacific
- with permission from the authors of the FNU PG Dip and Masters degrees I submitted the DFAT proposal, with more detail, to the Tongan Minister of Health and the Tongan Prime Minister.
- The proposal has been adopted
- Tonga National University has been promised DFAT funding to develop the proposed distance education based postgraduate pathology qualification for Polynesia.

Addressing Professional Isolation

- Just as the education proposal has been given a second chance at life the second proposal to DFAT may re-appear in a slightly different form.
- This forum may be the ‘midwife’ for this new entity

In saying thank you I now seek your advice (both informal and formal) to progress these initiatives.

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