

Life-saving Upgrade for Taveuni Hospital

FOR SEVERE PNEUMONIA, OXYGEN TREATMENT HAS BEEN SHOWN TO IMPROVE SURVIVAL BY 35 PER CENT

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A partnership this week between the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Cure Kids Fiji and Rotary has seen the upgrading of oxygen concentrators at the Taveuni District Hospital.

Oxygen is a lifesaving treatment for many severe illnesses in children, including severe pneumonia in children and severe new-born illnesses, which are leading causes of death in Fiji.

For severe pneumonia, oxygen treatment has been shown to improve survival by 35 per cent. Several oxygen concentrators were installed to service the 33 bed-hospital. Oxygen concentrators are small, portable machines which filter nitrogen from ambient air to supply more than 90 per cent pure oxygen.

The delivery of oxygen to patients via concentrators has been researched in parts of Africa, Asia and Papua New Guinea and has significant advantages over conventional cylinders including being cost effective and reliable. The Cure Kids Fiji Oxygen Project addresses the pressing and challenging need to ensure that those needing oxygen get it, with the aim of ensuring that no child dies due to a lack of oxygen. Oxygen is a vital commodity across the health service but is expensive and logistically difficult to provide. As well as providing and installing the equipment, an expert team led by paediatrician and researcher Dr Stephen Howie of the University of Auckland has provided training to hospital staff and biomedical engineers responsible for maintaining the equipment, whose training was facilitated by Azimut360. This ensures that that the equipment translates into improved patient outcomes that are sustainable.

Dr Howie said: “It is exciting to be working together with the Ministry of Health, Cure Kids Fiji, and a large number of wonderful financial, logistics and technical supporters to ensure that Taveuni Hospital has a reliable life-saving oxygen supply. No child should die from lack of oxygen, and no adult should either, and we look forward to this being true in the whole of Fiji.”

The Subdivisional Medical Officer Taveuni, Dr Alumita Vuakanisakea, is grateful and excited to receive the oxygen concentrators and said: “This very generous donation of the innovative concentrators will greatly help us in our delivery of essential oxygen to our patients in a cost-effective manner.”

The installation of the oxygen concentrators in Taveuni would not have been possible without the generous support from ArmaCup, Vijay Singh, Pacific Direct Line, AccorHotels, and the Rotary Club of Taveuni.

This is the second installation in an ongoing project with the goal of national coverage to ensure that oxygen is available for all communities. Ultimately, the partnership focuses on the provision of a reliable oxygen supply for every health centre and every child in Fiji.