



ROTARY CLUBS OF RYDE AND APIA - CHANGING FUTURES IN THE PACIFIC REGION WITH INTERPLAST

Thanks to the generous support of the Rotary Club of Ryde and the Rotary Club of Apia, through a Vocational Training Team grant, Interplast delivered a successful surgical skills workshop in Apia, Samoa, for surgeons from across the Pacific Islands, from 19-21 April 2016. This workshop was the first of its kind, and has been commended by all involved as a practical and effective way of developing plastic surgical skills in the Pacific Islands. This was the first time that Interplast has partnered with Rotary International for a Vocational Training Team grant, and looks forward to utilising this opportunity again in future programs.

BACKGROUND TO THIS PROGRAM

This was a skills workshop aimed at continuing Interplast's initiative to increase local capacity in plastic & reconstructive surgery services to the Pacific Islands. Interplast has a 33 year history of delivering plastic surgical programs across Asia and the Pacific Islands, with a twin-track approach of providing quality plastic and reconstructive surgical programs while also building the capacity of local medical staff through training and mentoring. In the Pacific Islands, surgeons are trained as 'general surgeons', with very few specialising. It is recognised that many plastic and reconstructive surgical skills are applicable across many specialties, and therefore there is a great benefit in delivering plastic surgical skills training for as many of the surgical professionals as possible.

This was the first time that such a workshop, utilizing live patients, has been delivered in the Pacific Islands, with the course building on the outcomes of a number of plastic surgical skills workshops delivered by Interplast and its volunteer surgeons since 2012 in Hobart, Auckland and Fiji.

The Apia workshop consisted of a practical, 'hands-on' training which focused on small-group tutorials with a 1:3 tutor to participant ratio, and in-theatre training. The course included a faculty of 5 volunteers (from Australia, NZ & Fiji), 10 Pacific surgeons & 3 local Samoan registrars.



Interplast TM

Repairing bodies & rebuilding lives
in the Asia Pacific region

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FACULTY, PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

Faculty: Dr Mike Klaassen & Dr Mark Gittos (Auckland), Dr Ben Norris (Sydney), Dr Simon Thomson (Hobart) and Dr Semesa Matanaicake (Suva).

Local coordinator: Dr Alfredo Adams (Samoa)

Interplast Support: Program Coordinator Thomas Loporto and Medical Photographer Woodrow Wilson (Melbourne)

Observers: John Brown & Kalma McLellan (Rotary Club of Ryde)

Participants: Drs Dyxon Hansell, Petueli Emose, Alfredo Adams, Tuuau Shaun Mauiiu, Areta Samuelu (Samoa), Deacon Teapa (Cook Islands), Scott Siota (Solomon Islands), Kolini Vaea (Tonga), Trevor Cullwick (Vanuatu), Maloni Bulanauca, Akhtar Ali, Mark Rokobuli (Fiji Is) Kabiri Itaka (Kiribati).



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The workshop took place over three days at the Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital (TTMH) in Apia, Samoa. The participants, who came from across the Pacific (including Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands & the Cook Islands), were selected primarily from those who have completed the previous Interplast Flap Workshops held in Hobart in 2013 and 2014, and a number of others who are now in roles where plastic surgical skills are highly relevant. The participant selection was done in close collaboration with Dr Semesa Matanaicake (Fijian Plastic Surgeon whose training was supported by Interplast). The participants were primarily senior surgeons in their respective countries, at a skill level appropriate to this type of training.

Over the three days, three 'teaching cases' were operated on, and these were complemented by various lectures. These cases were selected by the local surgeons and were chosen to demonstrate various surgical techniques. Prior to each case, the Interplast faculty ran a workshop to plan the surgery and illustrate the applied anatomy, plastic surgery principles and reconstructive options for each clinical case. The aim was for Pacific surgeons to lead the operations, with the visiting faculty providing assistance and supervision.



Above left: Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Mark Gittos demonstrates a technique to Tongan surgeon Dr Vaea; above right: Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Ben Norris assesses a young Samoan patient with Solomon Islands surgeon Dr Siota.

The course faculty was put together to bring an optimal mix of experience and skill. Dr Mike Klaassen and Dr Simon Thomson have held a leadership role in all previous Interplast Pacific workshops, with Mike also having authored and supplied the bulk of the theoretical material (notably three flap textbooks). Dr Ben Norris (current Interplast Country Coordinator for Samoa) joined the team bringing his long-standing experience in Samoa, and his thorough understanding of the local context. Mark Gittos, new to Interplast, was a great addition and brought a lot of enthusiasm. It was also very beneficial to have Fijian surgeon Dr Semesa Matanaicake involved in the faculty of the course, demonstrating his leadership with the junior surgeons, following a number of years of Interplast support in his training and development.

The course program featured lectures and tutorials, planning, team decision making about case selection, operating time to demonstrate skills, post-operative ward rounds, assessment and plans for ongoing aftercare. Dr Klaassen presented an overview of plastic surgery and the work of Interplast at the Grand Round lecture attended by the Minister of Health and hospital leaders, which was very well received.

Woodrow Wilson (professional photographer) joined the team during the workshop. He generously volunteered his services to Interplast to film the workshop, specifically the teaching components, to develop educational packages to share with the workshop's participants and other trainees in the Asia Pacific region. Woodrow also took a number of fantastic images, many of which are included in this report.

“THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THE FLAP COURSE...IT WAS AN EXPERIENCE AND HAVE LEARNT NEW TECHNIQUES AND TIPS FROM THE FACULTY. I DID LEARN A LOT AND SURELY WILL DEMONSTRATE IT IN NEAR FUTURE.”

- DR KOLINI VAEA – TONGA

LECTURES DELIVERED

Introduction to the course and how it evolved (M. Klaassen)
 Keystone local flap concepts (M. Klaassen)
 Local flaps: traditional and new (S. Thomson)
 Flap planning (S. Thomson)
 Risk management / complications (B. Norris)
 After care for flap patients (B. Norris)
 The emerging role of free flap surgery in the Pacific (S. Matanaicake)
 Fundamentals for good medical photography (W. Wilson)

RESOURCE BOOKS & VIDEOS PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to Local Flaps: a surgeon's handbook (2011) by E. Brown and M Klaassen
 Flap Reference Handbook: Pacific version (2014) by S. Thomson & M Klaassen
 Defining Local Flaps: clinical applications & method (2016) by M Klaassen, E Brown & F Behan
 Robert Acland's DVD atlas of anatomy (E version)



Above left: Dr Matanaicake (Fiji) demonstrates surgical planning to his fellow Pacific Island colleagues; above right: Pacific surgeons assess a patient post-operatively.

The workshop was delivered, as planned, over 3 days with minimal issues. 3 cases were operated on (other cases identified were deemed too complex & risky to operate on). Fortunately, one patient did present with multiple skin cancers, which provided an excellent teaching case, as it required several different flaps. Surgical outcomes were excellent for all three patients.

There were no notable logistical issues related to the program delivery. Overall, the program was very well received, with all 13 participants and 5 faculty giving positive feedback in their course evaluation questionnaire and faculty reports. 85 per cent of participants said they gained a lot of new skills and knowledge from the workshop, the remainder said they gained some new skills and knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR PLASTIC SURGERY TRAINING IN THE PACIFIC

International and local faculty and participants all agreed that this workshop was a success, and should be continued in the future where funding is available. This course very importantly also enabled surgeons from across the Pacific to spend time together and discuss their own cases and challenges. These networking opportunities are quite rare for them but are immensely beneficial.

The participants involved in this course represent the future of surgical capacity in the Pacific region. Already, a number of Pacific surgeons who have attended previous training in Hobart are being moved up in their country medical hierarchy and should be influential supporters of ongoing training for the Pacific island nations. It was evident during this workshop in Apia that many of the Pacific surgeons are well qualified to perform significant reconstructive surgery given their level of surgical skills and experience. Further support should be given to these individuals to build on these skills, and extend them to other trainees. Another similar course would be beneficial over the next 2 years. This could be rotated around the Pacific, and Tonga or Fiji are also good locations for future such courses. In-country teaching by visiting Interplast surgical teams would add significantly to this teaching.

Thank you to the Rotary Clubs of Ryde & Apia as well as the Rotary Foundation who funded this activity, as without your generous support, this program would not have been able to happen. Interplast looks forward to continuing our longstanding relationship with Rotary Clubs in Australia & New Zealand, and in our partner countries, in promoting our work and implementing our life changing and lifesaving programs.

Note: a final invoice and full financial acquittal will be provided to RC Ryde by 30 June 2016, once all costs associated with this program have been finalised.

Right: a very busy teaching session – faculty and participants working in two teams on a patient who required flap surgery on three separate parts of his body. This case provided an excellent teaching opportunity for trainees and quality surgical outcomes for the patient.



Left: Tongan surgeon Dr Kolini Vaea during the workshop.



Right: Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Thomson demonstrating patient assessment with local participants.



Left: Dr Kabiri Itaka from Kiribati, during the workshop. "I had learned a lot from the course and it's another escalating skill gained which I now need to work on so that we can master the skills we were taught."

Right: Samoan surgical registrar Dr Shaun Mauiliu “Thank you so much for your help also and coming to our islands . . . this course has taught me a lot and also how I handle soft tissues”.



Left: John Brown & Kalma McLellan from the Rotary Club of Ryde joined the program as observers and were able to tour the hospital with the team and learn about the teaching being delivered.

Right: Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Klaassen demonstrates surgical skills to the Pacific Island surgeons during a case in the operating theatre.



Left: At the end of a busy 3 days, faculty, participants and observers enjoy a final celebratory meal before returning to the various Pacific Islands, New Zealand and Australia.

*If you would like to utilise these photographs separately from this report, please seek advice from Interplast first, as these images have limited consent for publication.