

## Program Coordinator's Report 2023

### Introduction

I am grateful to Dr Tony Clarke and Frank Eastaughffe who have helped me coordinate the 2023 training program. I am enjoying the cultural and medical aspects of this role and I am slowly acquiring the background information required to optimize these programs.

Covid-19 has had less impact on our programs over the last 12 months but residual effects are still being felt. In 2022 ANZGITA was able to mount 2 programs (Fiji and Timor-Leste) but in 2023 we have restarted five country programs (Tonga, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands and Fiji). There has been more effort required to restart these suspended programs (three years is a long hiatus) but also a sense of increased enthusiasm for our visits. The ANZGITA program has expanded from one country 14 years ago to five countries currently with new enquiries now from Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Myanmar (virtual only) and Nepal.

### In-country registration documents

The documentation requirements have increased for all countries for doctors and nurses. The DFAT requirements for Fiji are particularly onerous for a 2 week stay. Documentation and credentialing requirements are increasing in all aspects of our careers (qualification check, police check, working with children card, cultural training) but it is still a bother to repeat all of this when volunteering. Frank Eastaughffe has put a lot of effort into the country portal process that simplifies the process. It has been working well. He is also investigating whether we can follow streamlined DAISI certification requirements in Solomon Islands and perhaps to extend it to other countries.

### In-Country Programs 2023

1. **Samoa: Week One: 23-27<sup>th</sup> January.** Week Two: 4-9<sup>th</sup> September
2. **Solomon Islands: Week One: 6-10<sup>th</sup> March.** Week Two: 28<sup>th</sup> August-1<sup>st</sup> September
3. **Tonga: Week One: 8-12<sup>th</sup> May.** *Week Two cancelled (lack of funding)*
4. **Fiji: Four week program: 10 July to 4th August**
5. Timor Leste: Week One and Two: 9-20<sup>th</sup> October. *Original Week One in May delayed to Oct.*

At the time of writing only the programs in blue (see above) have been completed but plans appear to be in order for the others to be deployed. Although there are always challenges the completed programs have all run successfully with no significant adverse events to date.

### Volunteer numbers from first call out for 2023

The numbers of doctors and nurses required for 12 weeks of programs is 21. ANZGITA had applications from 23 doctors and 21 nurses expressing interest in volunteering for 2023 (four "new" doctors, and three "new" nurses). Chris Hair and Di Jones attended two programs each.

It would be preferable if we could attract more volunteers, especially "new" ones that can be deployed with "old" hands to learn the ropes.

An article was published in the *Limbic* online publication in March regarding visits to the Solomon Islands (Mark Norrie and Robyn Nagel interviewed). We also hope GESA will allow us to include an ANZGITA flyer in the AGW registration information. These actions may encourage donation of old endoscopy equipment and raise the profile of ANZGITA.

### **Samoa program January 2023**

Doctors: Chris Hair, Ian Turner   Nurses: Di Jones, Karen Clarke

Inception: 2017

Chris Hair (Country leader), Ian Turner and Michael Miros have a great interest in Samoa. Tupua Tamasese Maet (TTM) hospital and in-country staff were very welcoming and enthusiastic. Endoscopy lists were well organized and one inpatient ward round attended. The team met up with Director General Ministry of Health, TTM hospital administration, Australian High Commissioner (Ms Emily Luck) and Head of School of Medicine National University of Samoa (Dr Rossana Tofaeono-Pifeleti).

The program in Samoa is supported with funding from the Epworth Foundation which is also providing observerships at their facilities in Victoria. Future goals of the Samoan team are to establish TTM as a recognized Pacific and regional service provider, try to extend the endoscopy service to island of Savaii and collate ANZGITA training with Samoan accreditation authority.

### **Solomon Islands program March 2023**

Doctors: Mark Norrie, Robyn Nagel   Nurses: Kim West, Madhov Acharya

Inception: 2014

Mark Norrie, Eileen Natuzzi (shared country program leadership role) and Terrence Tan have a strong interest and involvement with the country, particularly Eileen who initiated contact in 2011 and brings strong USA links to our engagement. A full American Embassy has opened in the country February 2023 and the country is juggling American, Australian and Chinese interest in the area. The Chinese medical ship Peace Ark visited in August and provided Chinese national medical assistance including endoscopy to SI residents. This ship will also planned to visit Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste.

There is also a hospital funded by the CPP that will be built adjacent to National Referral Hospital (NRH) that will provide services but the local doctors we spoke to had not been included in that discussion or employment in that area.

The strength of the SI program is that there are three full time consultant level dedicated endoscopists and a dedicated endoscopy unit area at NRH. In-country staff were very welcoming. The lists were well organized, but we had a number of patients fail to attend. The NRH maintenance department has made contact and is keen to help improve equipment repairs. This approach is appreciated and augurs well for further services development. There is interest in investigating establishing an endoscopy service on the island of Ghizo which Eileen Natuzzi will assist.

The in-country doctors are desirous of training in research. The incidence of betel nut chewing is 80% adults and tobacco chewing is common as well. Oral, oesophageal and gastric cancer incidences are high. There is an oesophageal cancer audit by surgical registrars almost completed and looking for publication by the surgical registrars. The WHO has a HBV vaccination program running but are just introducing a HPV program. We secured a DFAT Fellowship for Dr Elizabeth Wore, which will enable her to attend AGW this year, and undertake a ten week endoscopy and hepatology intensive training program in Australia in 2024.

### **Tonga program May 2023**

Doctors: Chris Hair, Tony Rahman   Nurses: Cath Conway, Di Jones

Inception: 2018

Chris Hair (Country leader) and Tony Rahman have an interest in this country that is still recovering from the massive 6.7 scale devastating earthquake in January 2022. The Vaiola Hospital (VH) has large stocks of donated equipment and is desirous of training to attain the benefits for the country of a good endoscopy service. In-country staff are all keen and enthusiastic. Perforated peptic ulcers are very common allowing biopsy skill practice during endoscopy. Other skills were taught in dry training session and using a training tool. Assistance was provided for two abstract submissions by

the surgical team for AGW. The team were invited to attend the retirement function of the CEO of the health department. The second training week for later in 2023 was cancelled early in the year due primarily to funding issues. On the next program there will be an emphasis on nursing training input into endoscopy protocols.

### **Fiji program July 2023**

Doctors: Michael Schulz, Andrew Hallam, Lybus Hillman, Darcy Holt, Kavin Nanda

Nurses: Karen Kempin, Helen Van Loenen, Caroline Kuru, Liz Sherrey, Lyn Dine

Inception: 2008

Michael Schulz is Country Leader. He led the program in July 2023 and met the newly appointed Fijian Minister of Health (Hon Antonio Rabici Lalabalavu). The trainer induction and academic program (from ANZGITA, FNU and CWMH) was well planned in advance and we have had good feedback from trainers on the development of trainees' skills and knowledge over the four-week program. 10 medical trainees (including FNU post graduate students) and 8 nurse trainees from Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Timor-Leste.

The Fiji Health Ministry have tendered to buy scopes for CWMH and this is an exciting and much needed development. In the meantime the 2023 program was conducted using old generation FujiFilm scopes and additionally some scopes were not functioning which limited the amount of endoscopy that could be performed in the first two weeks before loaner scopes arrived. Fiji does not have a dedicated endoscopy space but does have three dedicated endoscopists affiliated with FNU (Dr Joji Malani, Dr Mai ling Perman, Dr Aminiasi Rokocakau) who facilitated the program and participated as trainers.

FNU is proud of the WGO Training Centre designation and is keen to continue the program. The trainees were from different countries and the interest from other countries for training is in many ways a reflection of the success of the Training Centre. FNU and Fiji Health Ministry have reached the point at which they wish to consider methods of accrediting endoscopists within the country. FNU has approached ANZGITA to ask if we could help them with this process. Finlay Macrae has consulted with with FNU and others on the issue and Michael Schulz participated in a discussion while in Fiji. The Board will consider a way forward at an upcoming meeting.

### **Timor-Leste program October 2023 (FUTURE PROGRAM)**

Doctors: Kate Naphthali, Melissa Jennings, Chris Kiely, Ruth Hodgson, Daniel Steinfeldt

Nurses: Hanneke Whiteley, Kris Dodd, Liz Webster, Greg Greaves

Inception: 2017

Chris Kiely (Country leader) and Kate Naphthali have a great interest in Timor Leste. Dr Daniel Steinfeldt (respiratory physician) will be attending the Timor Leste program at the national hospital (HNGV) in Dili to facilitate **bronchoscopy** training and it will be interesting to have feedback on this initiative.

The planned program was postponed in May when it was discovered, quite i late, that Dr Celia Santos would be out of the country. We could not reschedule close to the original date as it clashed with national elections. Unfortunately, the two doctors scheduled at that time could not reschedule in October and were greatly inconvenienced. Timor-Leste has a large dedicated endoscopy space and one permanent dedicated consultant endoscopist (Dr Santos) who is very supportive of the program. Dr Santos helps train rotating medical registrars and other endoscopy services are provided by locum Cuban doctors (when skills allow). The enthusiastic medical registrars from 2022 will have left to attend Masters of Medicine programs in China for 2-3 years.

**The Olympus 190 scopes** have been donated to replace the current 180 series used by HNGV but we are still in need of a processor with which they are compatible. The reprocessing system and drying cabinet are planned to have their first and much needed post-COVID maintenance in August.. Timor Leste has large stocks of accessories (many donations from China) and conducts regular stocktakes.

The endoscopy program comprises integrated images into a Word document for endoscopy report. Hp gastritis and oesophageal varices were common in 2022. Clarithromycin and HBV therapy are available.

### **Palau vTERM**

#### **virtual Training in Endoscopy by Remote Mentoring (vTERM)**

**Inception: 2022**

The equipment has been set up in Palau and preparation for the first patient cases completed under the direction of Chris Hair. The first session is planned for late August with the in-country physician Dr Myra Adelbai. Myra has a large and diverse workload and progress has been slower than the team had hoped.

### **Kiribati June 2023**

#### **Pilot site assessment visit with HepB free**

**Dr Robyn Nagel and Sr Di Jones**

HBV incidence here is one of the highest in world at 15%, tragically with a high rate of HDV coinfection. Dr Alice Lee (and HepBFree team) visit twice yearly trying to improve community awareness, vaccination rates and compliance with therapy. Alice organized for the Health Minister to invite ANZGITA to assess whether we are able to offer endoscopy training services. We met with the Health Ministry Secretary, hospital administration staff at the Tungaru Central Hospital and in-country staff who were all very welcoming and enthusiastic for repeat visits. We have reported to the Board about adding Kiribati to the ANZGITA training sites and this will be further discussed.

### **Papua New Guinea**

Kate Naphthali and Di Jones have been approached by the chief surgeon of Enga province, with the support of the local government, to provide assistance in setting up an endoscopy unit in the new hospital being built and perhaps providing training in the fullness of time. Concerns have been raised about safety for trainers in that area. Discussions are ongoing. Private endoscopy is conducted in the private hospital in Port Moresby but discussions with ANZGITA with the public hospital in the past have not resulted in any engagement.

### **Myanmar**

ANZGITA delivered an endoscopy program in Myanmar from 2014 to 2018, and facilitated transition to a WGO Training Centre at which Dr Then Htut was a director. Amongst other considerations ANZGITA was unable to feel confident of trainer safety and the program was cancelled in 2019 although remote contact is kept with in-country doctors. The WGO and Then Htut have been requested by Prof Than Than Aye at Yangon General Hospital to reinstate desperately needed virtual endoscopy nurse training. Chris Hair and Di Jones have been asked if ANZGITA will contribute. There is personal sympathy for the dilemma of the in-country doctors but concern about the possibility of the military taking advantage of the help. ANZGITA will take opinion from DFAT about their perception of our involvement and a decision will be made by the Board at an upcoming meeting.

### **Conclusions**

It has been active year and it is likely that 11 weeks of programs will have been successfully delivered in 2023. There continue to many challenges, new and old, as outlined above and we are continuing to develop strategies to deal with these issues. Our programs continue to be positively received and attract interest from new countries.

Dr Robyn Nagel

Country Programs Coordinator