



# ANZGITA

Australian & New Zealand Gastroenterology  
International Training Association

## ANZGITA TONGA Program

### Background history and information

#### **The Kingdom of Tonga**

The Kingdom of Tonga is a small Pacific Island country located in the South Pacific. It is located 900 km to the South of Samoa, 700 km Southeast of Fiji and 2000km Northeast of Auckland, New Zealand. The island kingdom, also known as the Friendly Islands, is an archipelago of 176 islands of which 40 are inhabited. It is scattered over 700,000km of the South Pacific Ocean and has a total surface area of 750km. The five main island groups are Tongatapu, the main island where the capital Nuku'alofa is situated, Vava'u, Ha'apai, 'Eua and the two Niuas. Tonga's population is 100651 with a population density of 151 people/km<sup>2</sup> with around 74% of the population residing on the main island Tongatapu.

#### **Tonga Health Services**

The health services offered on the main island consists of one referral hospital, Vaiola Hospital, seven health centres and nineteen maternal child health clinics. In the outer islands, there are three district hospitals located in Vava'u, Ha'apai and 'Eua, eight health centres and fifteen maternal and child health clinics.

Tonga Health services are divided into six functional divisions which are; administration, health planning and information, public health, medical, nursing and dental. The medical divisions are divided into nine sections which are the paediatric ward, special care nursery, surgical ward, medical ward, obstetrics and gynaecology ward, mental health, anaesthesia and ICU (Intensive Care Unit), national centre for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, emergency and outpatients and the ENT (Ears, Nose & Throat). In May 2012, Vaiola Hospital completed the final phase of development and refurbishment since the beginning of the project in 2006 (supported by a generous grant by Japan). These are the most recent redevelopments since the opening of the previous hospital complex in 1971.

The district hospitals can perform medical and minor emergency surgeries, however for most tertiary services and treatment; patients are referred to Vaiola Hospital or await a visit from either a staff from Vaiola Hospital or overseas specialist team.

Vaiola Hospital has over 200 beds seeing an average of approximately 8000

admissions annually with the Medical Department accounting about 16% (1300) of those admissions. Vaiola hospital also provides secondary level general medical and surgical services. It also has radiology, pathology and pharmaceutical services and houses a 12- bed psychiatric ward which provides both inpatient and outpatient mental health care. Visiting specialist teams offer hearing services, eye surgery, corrective orthopedic surgery and surgeries for rheumatic heart diseases. Cases that are not treatable in Tonga can be sent abroad under the overseas patient referral scheme.

### **Tonga Medical and Surgical Services, Endoscopy.**

Vaiola has a well established medical and surgical services with a clear hierarchy and leadership system. Dr Sione Latu is the head of medicine with several years experience in the field, and Lord Vilami tangi is the head of surgery. In addition, Dr Lisiate 'Ulufonua is the medical superintendent. Junior consultants currently include Dr Loutoa Poese (medicine) and Dr Alamea (surgery). A small number of surgical and medical registrars, interns, and junior doctors are locally employed. These doctors may be offered the opportunity to advance their training by attending Fiji for diploma or masters level qualifications. All doctors are encouraged to perform endoscopy.

There are a number of theatre trained nurses with expertise now in the field of endoscopy. 3 of these nurses including nurse in charge, (talo) Sia Vakata, have competency in the field of endoscopy room manual reprocessing and skills from training in Suva. in 2020 there will be two further consultants returning from Fiji, including a medical and surgical consultant.

Vaiola hospital has a large fleet of Olympus 190 series endoscopes (6 gas/6 colon) and 3 complete towers with processors. In addition, there are enough endoscope consumables (brushes/buttons/etc) for a decade. This was a donation from Japan after the devastating Tsunami in Japan. However, the endoscopes did not come with maintenance contracts. The cleaning room is attached to the endoscopy room and is small and functional. There are plans to reclaim two further areas, one area for inventory and hanging and one area for a larger cleaning room. This will occur during 2019-20.

Consumables remain an issue, very similar to other areas of the Pacific. Case load includes around 300 procedures per year with similar findings to other parts of the Pacific, including PUD, liver cirrhosis (varices), a small number of colon polyps/cancer, and gastric cancer. Interventional cases are limited by equipment availability. A large donation of clips, injectors, balloons, bougie, biopsy forceps and snares was provided by ANZGITA in 2019. There is a need for variceal banding equipment.

Vaiola hospital is an exceptionally well organised service, with close connections between juniors, seniors and administration and close contact with ministry officials. It appears well structured although clearly a resource limited environment. ANZGITA was received with great thanks from all levels of hospital staff, and welcomed to assist Tonga sustain its endoscopy services, although much of their capacity has been self-sourced and resourced to date. Hence ANZGITA may have a small role in mentoring, guideline development, procurement of stock including consumables, redevelopment guidance education and teaching.

### **Tonga Hospitality and Culture**

Like Samoa and other islands of Polynesian culture, Tongan hospitality is second to none. Rich is Polynesian culture, Tongans themselves often have to operate in two different contexts, which they often call *anga fakatonga*, the traditional Tongan way, and *anga fakapālangi*, the Western way. Sunday is a religious and family day, and church is central to the Tongan way.

Like Samoa and Fiji, it is important to recognise that ANZGITA trainers are visitors and guests within Tonga, and show respect to Tongan way. It is polite to shake hands and greet with the Tongan 'Malo le lei', Fe fe hake (how are you), Sai pe malo (good thankyou).

Food is central to good hospitality in Tonga, and there is no shortage of it, with excellent sweet food, local produce, fish (tuna) and pig. Travellers should be aware of usual risks associated with eating local, including infectious diarrhoea, however this is uncommon. Infectious illnesses such as dengue and tuberculosis can occur, however malaria is not present.

There are a number of potential sites for accommodation, however the Tanoa Dateline is considered the best with very comfortable rooms, excellent breakfast buffet and pool. It is an exceptional hotel. The hospital employs a driver to take teams to and from the hotel. This may include a tour of Tongatapu on a Sunday.

### **ANZGITA proposal for Tonga**

ANZGITA trainers would gain more from a Tongan experience than just education and training. The cultural experience is rich, and the medicine is raw with disease patterns presenting late as is typical for the Pacific Island Nations. Tonga is an exceptionally hospitable nation, and trainers are welcomed and supported.

Furthermore, like Samoans, Tongans are represented beyond their shores in New Zealand and Australia. Thus, ANZGITAs reputation in our own countries as well as partnership countries may be aided by being seen to give back to those communities.

There are several areas in which ANZGITA is seen by Tonga (Vaiola) to have a role

- 1) Help foster a sustainable endoscopy service during this next decade of growth

- a. Use ANZGITA supports for limited consumables
    - i. Cleaning product (Whiteleys) for 400 cases/annum
    - ii. Small stock of variceal bands
  - b. Assist in redesign planning
    - i. Review stage 1 and stage 2 progress, assist with clean up safety gear if called upon (fume hood, scope buddy, ultrasonic)
  - c. Collaborate to build a maintenance program with Olympus ANZ
- 2) Collaborate to develop national treatment guidelines
- i. H.pylori, UGIB, LGIB, Hepatitis B guidelines
  - ii. Potential support to HepB free in future
- 3) Provide education and training in medicine and gastroenterology whilst on deployment to junior medical staff
- 4) Build professional development opportunities
- a. Fellowship opportunities in ANZGITA support sites
  - b. ANZGITA doctors and nurses to engage in Tongan teaching and mentoring