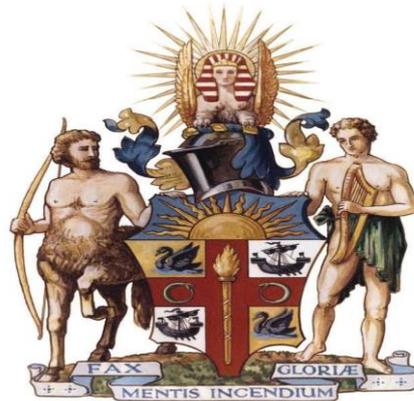


**THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF  
SURGEONS**



**In cooperation with**

**Overseas Specialist Surgical Association of Australia  
(OSSAA)**



**ENT SURGICAL TEAM VISIT TO TONGA 14 -19 November 2016**

**Team led by Dr Suren Krishnan**

# **EAR, NOSE and THROAT, HEAD & NECK VISITING SURGICAL TEAM REPORT**

## **VAIOLA HOSPITAL, NUKU'ALOFA, KINGDOM OF TONGA, NOVEMBER 2016**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 2016 Ear, Nose and Throat, Head & Neck Surgical (ENT-HNS) team visit to Tonga was supported by the Pacific Islands Project of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons with generous financial assistance from the Overseas Surgical Specialists Association of Australia.

The 2016 ENT-HNS team visit to Tonga was organised on the background of previous visits to build capacity in ENT, Head and Neck surgery in Tonga. These visits were initiated by the H.E.A.R.S. project of the DREAMIN Foundation and the Rotary Club of Prospect, South Australia.

H.E.A.R.S. is an acronym for Hearing and Education Assessment and Rehabilitation Service and is a project developed by the Rotary Club of Prospect and with assistance from the DREAMIN Foundation, in response to hearing loss and speech and language developmental delays impacting on educational achievements in children. These were identified during other Rotary project visits to the Pacific, including Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) and Rotary Overseas Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC).

HEARS has conducted hearing screening programs with assistance from Rotarians from the Rotary Clubs of Adelaide, Kidman Park and Prospect. The project is negotiating a similar service to the village of Vuda in Fiji and the city of Davao in the Phillipines.

Its primary aim over the last 4 years has been to support the training of Dr. Sepi Lopati and support the ENT, Head & Neck Services provided by the retiring Dr. Lei Saafi. HEARS has supported Dr. Sepi Lopati in attending courses in ENT, Head & Neck Surgery in Australia and New Zealand and has supported her training by the provision of educational resources and developing a pathway to specialisation taking into consideration, her in-country service requirements. The project has also supported the training of nursing staff in the assessment of hearing loss and in the provision of, and training in, the use of neonatal hearing screening tools. A significant contribution has been made by visits from audiologists from Adelaide.

The 2016 ENT-HNS visit was organised to provide this ongoing training support to ensure that the Kingdom of Tonga has a seamless succession of ENT-HNS service from Dr. Lei Saafi to Dr. Sepi Lopati and help identify and assist emerging junior doctor interest in the specialty to meet the country's needs. It is likely that Dr. Sepi and the ENT-HNS team will require this support for at least another 3 years and consideration should be given to assist Dr. Amone Vaka'uta in his training.

## THE TEAM

### THE VISITORS

Suren KRISHNAN – ENT, Head & Neck Surgeon

Alastair BROWNE – Anaesthetist

Kirsty KANKANUNEN – Audiometry Assistant and Neuropsychologist

### IN COUNTRY STAFF

Dr. Lei SAAFI – ENT, Head & Neck Surgeon

Dr. Sepi LOPATI - ENT, Head & Neck Surgeon in Training

Dr. Amone VAKA'UTA – Resident Medical Officer, ENT-HNS, Vaiola Hospital, Tonga

Loleta MAFI – Clinical Nurse ENT-HNS

'Ametisi PENITANI – Nurse ENT-HNS

Sione MOALA – Nurse ENT-HNS

## DIARISED EVENTS OF VISIT

### DAY 0 – SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016

The team left Adelaide on the morning of Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

The flight to Nuku'alofa was via Auckland, New Zealand. It required an overnight stay at an Airport Hotel and as a result we could not check luggage through to Tonga.

Air NZ staff in Adelaide were gracious and waived baggage excess charges but unfortunately the same courtesy was not extended by Air NZ staff in Auckland.

### DAY 1 – MONDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016

The team arrived in Nuku'alofa at about 1pm and checked into hotel and had lunch and proceeded to the hospital to start the clinic.

Dr. Lopati had vetted the patients so the team attended to complex cases requiring opinion and specialised strategies of management and patients who required surgery with the aim of performing surgical procedures for which Dr. Lopati wanted training and education.

36 patients were seen in clinic and we finished at about 9.30pm and listed 16 patients for surgery.

### DAY 2 – TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016

Two procedures were performed.

- 1) Left hemithyroidectomy
- 2) Endoscopic Intra nasal Polypectomy and bilateral grommets

The first case was a case of sinusitis and nasal polyps with secretory otitis media. Dr. Sepi who had attended an Endoscopic Sinus surgery course in Adelaide last year was proctored on the use of the

endoscope to perform a polypectomy and minor sinus surgery. This was the first time endoscopic sinus surgery had been performed in Tonga. The nursing staff were instructed on set up and instrumentation for surgery. Dr Sepi was instructed on the preoperative assessment with CT scans of the sinus, operative technique and the risks and limitations of surgery reinforced.

The second case was a large right thyroid mass of uncertain cytology which was adherent to the trachea and the pharynx. Dr. Sepi performed the operation under supervision with assistance from Dr. Amone. She performed the operation demonstrating good technique and correctly identified and preserved the Recurrent Laryngeal Nerve and parathyroid glands.

Between cases referred patients were reviewed and audiometry performed.

### **DAY 3 – WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

Five procedures were performed.

- 1) Excision left Pre-auricular skin tag
- 2) Excision cyst lower lip
- 3) Left Myringotomy
- 4) Bilateral grommets
- 5) Right Thyroid cancer - Bilateral neck dissection, total thyroidectomy

The total thyroidectomy and bilateral neck dissection case was of particular instructional value. Dr. Sepi performed the cases under supervision and with the assistance of Dr. Amone. She performed some aspects of the neck dissection and the left side of the total thyroidectomy. The case was instructional in understanding the perioperative assessment as the patient had Pemberton's sign demonstrating that the thyroid mass was so large it was occluding venous drainage. The post operative management of calcium metabolism was also highlighted.

The smaller cases were performed by Dr. Sepi under supervision.

Between cases referred patients were reviewed and audiometry performed.

### **DAY 4 – THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

Teaching ward round and surgery

- 1) Bilateral Grommets
- 2) Bilateral Grommets
- 3) Tonsillectomy
- 4) Right Parotidectomy

The ear cases were all complex chronic middle ear infections and Dr. Sepi, Dr. Amone and Nurse Loretta were all instructed in the signs and pathophysiology and treatment of chronic otitis media.

Between cases referred patients were reviewed and audiometry performed.

Suren Krishnan presented a lecture on Neck Infection to staff of Vaiola Hospital and members of the Tongan Medical Association.

## **DAY 5 – FRIDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

Teaching ward round and surgery

- 1)Excision right acanthoma
- 2)Excision left post-auricular cyst
- 3)Left myringotomy and grommets
- 4)Right myringotomy and grommets

Teaching session in the afternoon on audiology and in service on the use of Otoscan equipment and the portable audiometer donated by th DREAMIN foundation and Rotary Club of Prospect.

## **DAY 6 – SATURDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

Teaching ward round and surgery

Suren Krishnan gave a tutorial on Thyroidectomy and hypothyroidism and hypocalcemia.

Instruments were packed and journey home commenced.

## **DAY 7 – SUNDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

Return to Adelaide

## **CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

The 2016 Ear, Nose and Throat, Head & Neck Surgical (ENT-HNS) team visit to Tonga was successful in its aim to train and upskill Dr. Lopati and staff at Vaiola Hospital.

### **About 45 patients were seen and 15 patients had surgical treatment.**

I would like to thank Dr Alastair Browne and Kirsty Kankunen and staff at Vaiola Hospital for their contributions. I am particularly grateful to OSSAA for their support of this vital project to train and develop an ENT, Head and Neck Service in Tonga.

Dr. Lopati has proven to be a worthy trainee in ENT, Head & Neck Surgery and another supportive candidate in Dr. Amone Vaka'uta has been identified. They will both require continuing professional support, training and education. The model of providing in country visits and visiting surgeons training the local surgeons by teaching in clinics and operating theatres is to be encouraged. The concentration of effort should not be on providing high volume service to the community but rather by selectively choosing cases that local surgeons encounter and can be trained to perform surgery with safety and competency.

The local staff can be entrusted to communicate other needs including audiometric services, allied health and nursing services.

There needs to be continued support for Drs. Lopati and Amone to attend teaching courses in Australia and New Zealand and encourage them to gain the qualification of Diploma in Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Surgery provided by the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

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**Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery**

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**Chairman**

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**THE TEAM**

Ametisi PENITANI – Nurse, Kirsty KANKANUNEN, Loleta MAFI – Clinical Nurse , Suren KRISHNAN ,  
Dr. Sepi LOPATI , Sione MOALA – Nurse, Dr. Amone VAKA’UTA , Alastair BROWNE



**DR. KRISHNAN TEACHING NECK SURGERY TO  
DR. SEPI**



**KIRSTY KANKUNEN AND THE AUDIOLOGY  
TRAINING SESSION**



SUREN KRISHNAN SUPERVISING DR. SEPI AND DR. AMONE



ALASTAIR BROWNE AND SUREN KRISHNAN AT WORK



LARGE THYROID TUMOUR REMOVED



CHILD WITH EAR DISEASE



PAROTID TUMOUR REMOVED