

# NEWSLETTER

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## UNIQUE CHALLENGES, LOCAL HEROES

In Timor-Leste, Dr. Joao Ximenes has been able to continue to perform cleft lip repairs on infants whose clefts are less severe.

Recognising the challenges for patients that need to come from a long distance, both Dr. Ximenes and Acting Head Nurse Cornelio M. Mok Freitas are developing a proposal to submit to the Timor-Leste Government in order to provide a surgical mission to the hospital at Suai, which is 138km from Dili, on the border with West Timor.

Dr. Ximenes and Mok hope to take a small team of surgical, anaesthetic, scrub and recovery nurses (based on the OSSAA model) to undertake simple cleft lip surgery.

This is a great step towards building local capacity, and OSSAA is proud that our counterparts have independently initiated this mission.

OSSAA is committed to doing all that we can to support Dr. Ximenes and Mok in this new development.



## REMEMBERING DR. JOHN HARGRAVE AO

On the 6th of August 2020, Dr. John Hargrave, AO, MBE passed away after a long illness, aged 89.

John's work in Timor-Leste and Indonesia throughout the 1990s was both the inspiration and foundation for all of the work that OSSAA has been able to achieve over the last two decades. Taking his skills as a leprosy, hand and burn surgeon to this region, John built trust and confidence in these communities at a time when this was sorely needed.

His philosophy, and model, of "bottom-up" delivery of surgical aid delivery and education is a legacy that we at OSSAA are proud to carry on. His support, mentorship and pleasure at hearing of our teams' ongoing work continued for all the years after he finished his clinical involvement.

John is missed by the OSSAA team and our counterparts in Timor-Leste and Indonesia who always asked after John, or as he described himself, 'orang kampung' – village man.



## NEW SUPPLY DELIVERY PARTNERS

When visiting Timor-Leste and Indonesia, we provide surgical supplies to ensure otherwise poorly resourced clinics and hospitals have sufficient resources until our next visit and beyond. With our inability to travel to Timor-Leste at this time, and Dr. Joao Ximenes continuing to treat cleft and burns cases, both sutures for cleft repairs and skin-graft blades for burn treatment have been running low in supply.

A neighbour of Dr. David McLeod, one of our OSSAA anaesthetists, has been able to help David in securing a new method of delivering essential surgical supplies to our counterparts in Timor-Leste on behalf of OSSAA.

**Babcock Helicopters**, who transport workers and equipment to the oil and gas fields off the Timor-Leste coast, have very kindly offered to assist in getting these essential surgical items from Adelaide to Dili. This will allow Dr. Ximenes and his team to continue their treatment of clefts and burns.

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

A tumultuous year is coming to an end. We look forward to the end of the pandemic and a resumption of our humanitarian trips to Timor-Leste and eastern Indonesia.

In the meantime, progress is being made on our aim to train for local self-sufficiency. **Sister Joy Booth** continues to work online with **Mr. Cornelio M. Mok Freitas**, providing nursing tuition and training through Powerpoint presentations where video conferencing is unfeasible. Mok is a standout example of self-improvement and dedication to lifting health outcomes for his community. Further, he and plastic surgeon **Dr. Joao Ximenes**, who was trained by long-time OSSAA team leader Mark Moore, are planning a local surgical team trip to Suai to operate on uncomplicated clefts, using the OSSAA model of care. To further assist, Mark is bundling up medical consumables which will soon be despatched to Dili. We are proud of the progress being made.

**Timor-Leste has, to date, only recorded 30 COVID-19 cases (none recently) and zero deaths, which is great to hear!**

Contact is being maintained with the nuns of both Haliluk and Cancar hospitals in Indonesia.

It is perhaps prophetic that the release of the James Bond film *No Time To Die* has been twice delayed now. Please diarise Sunday **11th of April 2021** for the quite literally long-awaited film-night fundraiser! Also, our mid-year luncheon is currently planned for June.

The **OSSAA AGM** was held on 15th October 2020. We are grateful to the contribution of **Anthony Rologas**, who resigned due to work commitments. Thank you so much, Anthony! We were, however, delighted to see the return of **Connie Granozio** to the committee. Welcome back, Connie!

**In honour of Dr. John Hargrave, who inspired the formation of OSSAA, there will be an annual scholarship** awarded to an enthusiastic humanitarian trainee surgeon or anaesthetist in the form of an overseas trip with one of our teams. This will augment the Doug and Terri Omond scholarship, which offers the same opportunities for nursing and complementary medical professions.

Thank you for your continuing support. There are many green shoots that we will cultivate over the coming year.

Be safe!

- **Patrick Markwick-Smith**



## MEET MOK

A primary focus of our surgical teams is education and support for our local counterparts, with a long-term goal of capacity building and independent practice. Much time on OSSAA's trips is spent establishing constructive and trusting relationships with local staff.

Mr. Cornelio M. Mok Freitas (Mok), who we first met in 2012 as a graduate nurse, is now the Acting Head Nurse in the operating theatre of Hospital National Guido Valadares, in Dili. Mok is committed to self-improvement and has developed a strong ability to improve health outcomes for the patients in his care, as well as the wider local community.

Not only has Mok made himself available to work with our teams on virtually every mission in Timor-Leste since 2012, but he has also taken advantage of a 6-month scholarship, working in hospitals in Wellington, New Zealand in 2019.

With the interruptions caused by COVID-19, he has worked very hard to maintain his education and support opportunities by maintaining remote contact with his mentor Joy Booth (pictured with Mok) at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Whilst trials of secured Zoom and Skype have had limited success, Joy has been able to provide and discuss a series of training Powerpoint presentations, before he independently presents this vital information to his theatre nursing colleagues in Dili.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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