

Mission Report

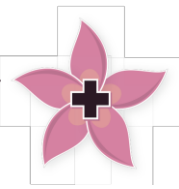
Basic Surgical Skills Laparoscopy Workshop & Perineal Repair Workshop

Pasifika Campus, Suva

5-07 July 2015

Course Convener: Dr S. Pillay

A FOFH Project in association with Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Pacific Society for reproductive Health and Fiji National University



Background

Friends of Fiji Health have been conducting medical missions to Fiji for five years. It has focused on providing complex surgical procedures in the nation's hospitals and early intervention services in rural areas. In the past two years or so it has complemented its missions with a significant focus on enhancing the capacity of Fiji's health system and professionals.

It has done this in two ways. First, Friends of Fiji Health has been instrumental, with key partners including New Zealand hospitals, the MAA and companies like Johnson and Johnson (New Zealand) and Olympus (NZ & Australia) in equipping the Fiji Health system with some modern equipment and supplies. Secondly we have progressively added skills development opportunities to all our missions. With the availability of reliable modern equipment and skilled experts to use them Fiji's health system is enhanced and in future will lead to reduced reliance on periodic overseas missions.

It is in this context that Friends of Fiji Health conducted the ground breaking Basic Surgical Skills Workshops in Laparoscopy and Perineal Repair from 5-7 July 2015 in Suva. This is a report on that mission.

In late 2014 Friends of Fiji Health received a formal invitation by Associate Professor Dr Alec Ekeroma, then president of Pacific Society of Reproductive Health (PSRH), a sub branch of RANZCOG. The current acting Dean of Fiji National University, Professor Rajat Gynaneshwar also extended a similar invitation. The focus of these invitations was on promoting women's health in the South Pacific and the raining programme was to be an integral part of PSRH seminar in Fiji in July 2015.

Trustees of Friends of Fiji Health (the Board) responded enthusiastically to the request as it dovetailed with our growing focus on building capacity in Fiji and because the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and the Fiji National University endorsed it. The course was for postgraduate Obstetricians and Gynaecologists as well as postgraduate midwives. To my knowledge this is the first time such (formal) opportunities have been provided in Fiji to those who utilise these skills on a daily basis.

The course utilised an interactive teaching learning methodology enabling timely discussions, demonstrations and the sharing of knowledge. This made for many opportunities for learning from each other and from the facilitators.



Facilitators

Course Faculty

Course Convener:	Sunil Pillay	Gynaecologist, NZ
Associate Convener:	M. Tupou	Gynaecologist, Fiji
	L. Tomlinson	Gynaecologist, NZ
Tutors:	Rajendra Kumar	Gynaecologist, NZ
	Ravind Raj	Gynaecologist, NZ
	Shiu Kumar	Gynaecologist, NZ
	Mairi Wallace	Gynaecologist, NZ
	Prem Gill	Senior Registrar, NZ
I	Ifiremi Waqa	General Surgeon, Fiji

Specialist Medical Representatives

Wendy Bartlett	Johnson & Johnson, NZ
Kate Lynch	OLYMPUS, Australia



Facilitators and BSS Course Participants

Objectives

The two courses were run consecutively. The objectives for each course were developed with input from the sponsors.

The Objectives for the Basic Laparoscopic Surgery Skills course were:

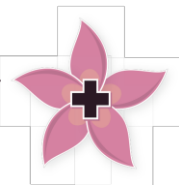
Care of correct handling and use of surgical instruments.

Essentials of an Endoscopic Tower

Spatial skills in Laparoscopy

Responsibilities to patient, surgical team members and theatre etiquette.

Understand principles of safe surgery.



The Fiji National University was gifted an Endoscopic Tower by OLYMPUS Australia for their basic surgical skills labs. The growing use of this equipment will require up skilling of their professionals and the surgical course assists in that goal.



The Dean of The Fiji National University receiving the Endoscopic Tower donated by OLYMPUS Australia.

Perineal Repair Workshop

We are aware of the long-term negative impact on women's health and life experiences that result from poor perineal repair. As a result Friends of Fiji Health responded very positively to a request to support the skill levels of professionals in this area.

The Objectives for the Perineal Repair Skills course were:

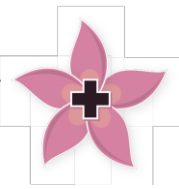
Understand the importance of gentle tissue handling and meticulous haemostasis.

Understanding of perineal anatomy and identifying perineal defects due to birthing.

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Knowledge of different suture materials and demonstrate surgical knot tying

Course Organisation and Venue

The details of the course were developed by the Course Convenors and sanctioned by RANZCOG. The RANZCOG college crest on all course material demonstrated its sanction. Furthermore the College issued all certificates awarded to participants and they also gained continuing medical education credits, as did the facilitators.

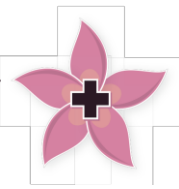
The two courses were designed as a three-day event with the first two days dedicated to Basic Surgical Skills in Laparoscopy and the third day to Perineal Repair for midwives and doctors.

Fiji National University provided the Pasifika Campus as the venue and PSRH was responsible for recruiting course participants. Thus the course was a joint effort by the organisations named above and each had its own responsibilities for different aspects of the exercise.

Setting up a venue for teaching and laboratory work required considerable coordination and expertise. The laboratory was set up specifically for the courses and proved adequate for this first time exercise. Each course required a different set up and this was adequately managed.

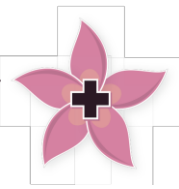
The equipment previously donated by OLYMPUS was used for the Laparoscopy Skills workshop and specific material had to be provided for the perineal repair workshop. These were accessed from local suppliers and proved very appropriate for the skills being developed.

Further support was given by REMS Medical, NZ. They donated Electrosurgical Unit along with consumables. These were for the setting up of Basic Surgical Workshop.



Kate Lynch, Ravind Raj, Rajen Kumar and Shiu Kumar setting up the lab

The courses comprised of lectures, discussions and demonstrations. A course booklet was available for all participants.

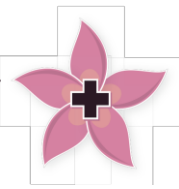


Kate Lynch – OLYMPUS, Australia teaching Laparoscopic hand eye coordination

Participants

Seven professionals attended the Basic Skills in Laparoscopy. This was considerably below the capacity of the course and was a disappointment to the organisers. However those who attended were able to get a more intensive experience. Considerable effort should be given to increasing the numbers attending in the future in order to build the competence of Pacific surgeons in the use of these contemporary techniques.

Twenty midwives and doctors attended the Perineal Repair workshop. The course was ambitious in covering both third degree tear and episiotomy in the same course and this will need to be reviewed in light of the feedback from attendees. Another learning was the possibility of making course handouts sufficiently detailed to enable use by those in remote areas and who therefore could not attend the course.



Perineal Repair Workshop in progress

Course facilitators worked as a team during the sessions and often led them jointly. There were also other volunteers at hand to provide guidance in the teaching learning process.



Dr. Shiu Kumar & Dr. Louise Tomlinson teaching surgical skills

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Sessions included lectures and used different media to make convey essential points.

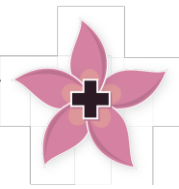


Dr. Prem Gill discussing Laparoscopic Myomectomy

The course was very practical with lots of opportunities for participants to practice under supervision.



Wendy Bartlett teaching essentials of surgical knot tying



Course Outcomes and Evaluation

Formal evaluations were conducted for each course.

Course Participants

Those who attended the Basic Laparoscopy Skills Course were very satisfied with course materials and the presenters, and were satisfied with the length of the course and the venue. They found the sessions appropriate and informative and that it would contribute to improving their clinical skills. Clearly the Basic Laparoscopy Workshop participants were overwhelmingly positive and valued the relevance of the experience.

Less structured feedback from those who attended the Perineal Repair workshop strongly commended the content and the experience. They felt that this skills course should be included in the training of midwives and nurses especially where doctors are not available.

Course Facilitators

Facilitators provided fairly detailed comments on their experiences and observations. Given that Friends of Fiji Health relies entirely on volunteers their comments ought to shape the modus operandi for all future missions.

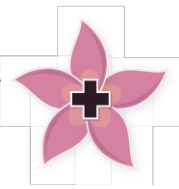
Volunteers highly value the opportunity of providing their expertise as part of the Friends of Fiji Team. Their observation is that a lot of work went into the mission from experts and organisation. They felt that the lectures were of a high standard and that attendees were very willing learners.

There was disappointment at the number that attended the Basic Laparoscopy Skills workshop and wondered if the information on the course, and its importance had been clearly communicated. They would like to see some improvement in logistics around transport and meeting arrivals.

All the volunteers commented on the privilege of being involved and wanted to stay engaged with other Friends of Fiji Health missions.

Comments and Conclusion

This mission was focused entirely on developing the skills of medical professionals in Fiji in the use of fairly sophisticated technology for surgical procedures and for perineal repair. The objectives were achieved almost



fully in the case for enhancing skills in perineal repair. This addresses an important issue of women's health.

While the mission was successful in enhancing basic skills in laparoscopy the number attending was disappointing. Considerable effort will need to go into increasing the numbers attending, especially from Fiji, if a similar mission is to be more successful in the future.

We should note that the ability to mount these courses is now available in Fiji given that they have the equipment necessary. Friends of Fiji Health have achieved, in this case, its three year objective in two years.

I am left with this thought for the Board of Friends of Fiji Health to contemplate:

"There is never a time to stop advocating for courses and commitments that will have greater impact on long term benefits..... but there is also never a time when we as a charitable organization should stop to evaluate the value of our input to guide our future directions"

I want to acknowledge the assistance of all those who participated in these courses and the support provided by our many partners in Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.

Dr S. Pillay

Gynaecologist and Convener

September 2015