

It takes a virtual village



We are so proud and excited to share that our congenital hypothyroidism newborn screening project launched on the 12th June. Pictured above: Dr Zarina Kere, paediatric registrar at the NRH and local project lead.

This is a 3-year pilot project to initiate the first ever newborn screening of any kind in the Solomon Islands, commencing with all newborns delivered at the National Referral Hospital (NRH), with a view to expanding to the rest of the Solomon Islands once feasibility is established. As a reminder, congenital hypothyroidism is an easily treatable disease affecting 1 in 2,000-4,000 newborn infants globally, resulting in lifelong health problems including intellectual disability if not detected and managed early. The incidence in the Solomon Islands is unknown, but not for much longer.



TPA thankfully acknowledges the paediatric and obstetric teams at NRH and A/Prof Shubha Srinivasan, co-head of Endocrinology at the Children's Hospital Westmead. Our gratitude also to Revvity who have printed cards and donated reagents, DHL for support transporting cards from Brisbane to Sydney each week pro bono, the Sydney Children's Hospital Network and Caring and Living as Neighbours who provided a grant for printing of parent information.

In July, the team visited Honiara for the project launch. Posters have been delivered to antenatal clinics, fact sheets and consent forms disseminated, and midwives trained in taking cord blood. The official launch brought together His Excellency Mr Robert Sisilo, High Commissioner for the Solomon Islands in Canberra, Mr Kelton Sikala, Senior Program Manager at DFAT, Dr Janella Solomon, Medical Superintendent at NRH, Mrs Freda Pitakaka, Chief Research Officer at the Ministry of Health, Dr Leeanne Panisi, NRH Head of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Sister Susan Dikahehe, Nurse Educator, Dr Titus Nasi, Head of Paediatrics, Dr Lawrence Diau, Medical Services Director for Honiara City Council, all pictured below. The first cord blood specimens have already started to arrive in Australia.

Please see the [Linked In post](#) from the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network.



It was a great privilege to join with the Pacific Paediatric Association (PPA) biennial conference in April.

As well as strengthening TPA's current relationships with paediatric colleagues in the Pacific, it was excellent to meet new friends to TPA, including several who will contribute their subspecialist expertise.

Dr Currow was also pleased to contribute to a panel discussion on support for children with developmental problems.

It was very special for TPA to be recognised with an award of appreciation. This is an award for all who contribute to TPA: our volunteer subspecialists, operational volunteers, board, advisory group and professional organisations providing pro bono support (Bongiorno, HWL Ebsworth, Hall Consulting Group and WebDesignTrek). Pictured below: Dr Currow with Dr Ilisapeci Vereti, Head of Paediatrics in Fiji and President of the PPA.



As well as these special events, our business as usual case discussions continue to demonstrate the power of a virtual village. This quarter we wanted to highlight a difficult case in the Solomon Islands where awesome efforts were made to save the life of a baby born with a genetic condition, who was identified to have an acute surgical complication in the first 24h of life. To attempt to confidentially summarise a clinically complex scenario, it was very difficult to find a safe way to provide sustenance or life-saving surgery to this baby: The genetic condition was associated also with a low platelet count, making surgical intervention risky. The clinical complexity of the case was exacerbated by the lack of availability of platelet and fresh frozen plasma transfusions, and the technical difficulty of IV access.

Colleagues from the Australian College of Neonatal Nurses who had been introduced to the team by TPA happened to be in Honiara providing face to face neonatal teaching. She helped to liaise with TPA and neonatologist from the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney, Dr Meredith Ward. Ultimately, a safe course was charted for this unwell neonate, led by Dr Hicks Bule of NRH's neonatal team and NRH surgeon Dr Rooney Jagilly. To round out the village, Dr Caleb Vangana, paediatrician from Tuvalu was able to share with his NRH colleagues a very similar case he had

had, and how he had approached discussions with the family.



Australian volunteers continue to benefit from exposure to pathology rarely seen in Australia and to the challenges of problem-solving and adapting their clinical reasoning to resource-limited settings. Do you know a subspecialist, senior nurse or allied health professional who would like to [join our community?](#)



South Pacific Journal Club

Thank you to Dr Palu Teumohenga from Tonga for an excellent presentation on transfusion of blood products and clinical outcomes for patients with dengue fever, and to Dr Rajiv Agrawal for your expert facilitation. It was an enlightening discussion on how dengue is managed across the Pacific.

Please note any photographs of children are generated by artificial intelligence software (except those used of staff and colleagues with consent!)

<https://www.takingpaediatricsabroad.org.au/>