



COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAISI

Doctors Assisting In Solomon Islands

IN THIS ISSUE

Chairman's Annual Report

By Tim Nicholson



In the two years that I have been elected chair of DAISI, I have seen a rapid transformation and growth in our membership, and the generosity of my surgical and anaesthetic colleagues has been nothing short of amazing.

Volunteer placements

This year alone, 93 DAISI specialists and nurse volunteers from Australia and New Zealand have given their time to work in the Solomon Islands, with over 700 patients screened, and 540 operations performed.

Memorandum of understanding

Perhaps the most significant of all achievements, is the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DAISI and the Solomon Islands Ministry for Health. This MoU allows for delivery of volunteer services in each of the provinces of the Solomon Islands, in support and collaboration with the Solomon Islands Ministry for Health, in a coordinated manner with a degree of expectation and accountability between both parties on shared projects. This recent achievement will pave the way for hopefully many more shared DAISI missions with the Solomon Islands Government Ministry for Health.

Laparoscopic Training

Laparoscopic surgery was first introduced to the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in February this year, by a team of colorectal surgeons with a second workshop in April run by Sydney surgeon Prof Charbel Sandroussi. A third laparoscopic workshop was conducted in June. Local surgeon Dr Scott Siota and his registrars are now doing diagnostic laparoscopy and laparoscopic appendectomy independently, which is a great achievement when you consider the improvisation required.



Laparoscopic Surgery takes off in Honiara

Prof Charbel Sandroussi from Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (Sydney) led the second of three laparoscopic workshops to Honiara this year.

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Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry for Health

Dr Greg Jilini, Dr Chris Aumanu, Dr Gary McKay, PS Dr Tenneth Dalipanda and Dr Jagilly at celebration dinner after MoU signing in July 2017

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DAISI Charity Ball

By Nili Hali

The DAISI charity ball will be on Friday 3rd November 2017, and located at the Novotel, Manly. Tickets are \$175 per person, with all money raised going towards sending an ambulance with much needed surgical supplies to Kilu 'ufi Hospital, in the remote Malaita province.

Welcome cocktails will begin for guests at 6:30pm in the foyer to the Grand Ballroom. Live Pacific Islands music will be the backdrop to this event. The main event will begin in the Grand Ballroom at 7pm, and finish at 11pm, and is strictly by reservation, with tickets on sale online at www.daisi.com.au until 30th October 2017. It is expected to be a sellout, with almost half of the 250 tickets sold to date.

This will be the first DAISI charity ball of its kind, with the intention of making it a regular annual event.

Organiser Dr Gary McKay, says, "... it is not only a great chance for like-minded people to get together and celebrate previous achievements, but also a forum to allow those who want to support DAISI, but can't necessarily volunteer, to become involved."



Novotel Hotel, Manly which is the venue for the upcoming DAISI charity dinner.

The event will have a band and a number of musicians performing on the night, with the opportunity to dance the night away in the Grand ballroom. It is strictly black tie, and those who turn up without a black tie will be able to purchase one on the night.

An ambulance to be donated to Kilu 'ufi hospital will feature at the entrance to the Novotel, allowing those attending the Charity Ball to place any donated medical equipment directly in the back of the ambulance. This will then be sent in a container to the Solomon Islands the following week.

DAISI CHARITY BALL - FRI 3RD NOV 17

DAISI Charity Ball tickets can be purchased online by visiting www.daisi.com.au (ticket sales close 30/10/17)

DAISI is registered with the ATO as a tax-deductible charity with all ticket purchases tax deductible.

Alternately tickets can be purchased by emailing: staff@daisi.com.au

Or call 0478 067 159 and speak directly with one of our volunteers.

Chairman's Annual Report (continued)

Medical Student Rotations

DAISI has been able to coordinate many international medical students to attend placement at a number of hospitals in the Solomon Islands. These rotations are a real eye opener for medical students, and can be quite a life and career-changing event. Medical students also provide invaluable support to these medical and surgical missions, which often have a skeleton crew that is worked to the bone.

Donations

Although DAISI has not actively sought funding, this year has seen a dramatic rise in donations. Many thanks to Dr Veral Vishnoi, from Hunter Resident Medical Officer Association (HRMOA) in Newcastle who along with assistance from three Newcastle

colorectal surgeons was able to raise \$7500 from their fund raiser in August 2017. Special thanks also goes to Olympus and the numerous hospitals that have donated medical and surgical equipment, with particular mention to Mater, Hurstville and Westmead Private Hospitals.

Medical Registration

From July 2017 DAISI volunteers are exempt from having to pay a registration fee to volunteer in the Solomon Islands.

Charity Ball

I welcome everyone to the end of year DAISI Charity ball to be held on Friday 3rd November 2017 at the Grand Ballroom, Novotel, Manly. Based on current ticket sales it will be a sellout event, with all money

raised going to medical causes in the Solomon Islands. This is a unique opportunity for those who have volunteered to reunite and celebrate, and those who haven't, to get inspired. A three course meal and unlimited drinks will be on offer, so please organise a "plan B" for a safe return home after this event.

Elections

Sadly I will be standing down as Chair at the upcoming elections and it is time for new candidates to rise to the occasion. I will however remain involved as an active member of DAISI for the foreseeable future. I would like to offer my gratitude to the support of Gary McKay. His unlimited enthusiasm and hard work for the DAISI cause is inspiring, and I look forward to continued collaboration with him in the future. Thanks also to my fellow board members Sepehr Lajevardi and Gareth Iremonger for their contributions.

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Charity Ball to raise money.

DAISI Charity Ball Friday 3rd Nov 2017 will raise money to send an ambulance with medical equipment to Kilu 'ufi hospital in Malaita

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Dr Santee Santhanam discusses the merits of teaching rather than just doing.

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Treasurer's Report

The 2016/17 financial year has seen a rapid expansion of activities for DAISI.

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Dr Stephen Smith, Dr Robert Winn, Honorable Health Minister Dr Tautau Agikimua Kaitu'u, Dr Matt Rickard, Dr Rooney Jagilly, Dr Mark Lucey & Dr Eric Yip at dinner in Honiara in February 2017.

Memorandum of Understanding with Ministry for Health

by Dr Anil Koshy

In July 2017 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Solomon Islands Ministry for Health and DAISI. This MoU paves the way for a more cooperative and coordinated approach to future DAISI visits to the Solomon Islands.

Core to this MoU is an understanding that all activities between DAISI and the Ministry for Health represent a joint partnership. The overall aim of this partnership and role of DAISI is to provide advanced knowledge and expertise in medicine and surgery and apply that through training of doctors and nurses and other means in supporting NRH and its provincial hospitals in their work.

DAISI volunteer Nili Hali, a lawyer who drafted the MoU believes that "charities cannot be effective working in isolation and cannot achieve lasting change without working with and alongside a country's existing government and infrastructure".

By working with the Solomon Islands Ministry for Health in all future programs, there will be a shared sense of responsibility

for the planning, implementation, and success or failure of projects.

Chair of DAISI Dr Tim Nicholson, believes this shared approach will lead to improved organization of DAISI visits, with greater involvement of local doctors

In a country where a lot of medical aid has been supplied by NGOs (most with religious affiliation) the Solomon Islands has had to accept the good and bad of charities in their country. With a rapidly growing medical workforce, largely due to the increased number of Cuban trained medical graduates, the next decade will probably see a shift in the emphasis from charity driven medical aid, to government organized and funded medical aid. This is an important step in Solomon Island's strive for self-determination, and non-reliance on charities and overseas aid. In fact the eventual aim of organizations such as DAISI, should be to support the local government process, so much than in time, its own existence is no longer required. "By making itself redundant, DAISI will have done its job" says DAISI Chair Dr Tim Nicholson

Laparoscopic Surgery Takes Off in Honiara

by Dr Danny Kozman

For a long time surgeons in the Solomon Islands have been hamstrung in making accurate diagnosis and offering minimally invasive surgery. While CT scanning and diagnostic laparoscopy are central to our practice in Australia, these have not been available to patients in the Solomon Islands. To date, surgeons have had to choose between watchful waiting or laparotomy to investigate and treat patients resulting in prolonged recovery and delayed diagnosis.

Due to the extreme generosity of hospitals such as Westmead, Mater & Hurstville Private, four well maintained and fully functional laparoscopic stacks have been donated allowing surgeons to diagnose and treat conditions such as appendicitis, cholecystitis & ovarian pathology minimally invasively. These, amongst many other donations were loaded into a shipping container in November 2016 and delivered to Honiara via sea.

Equipment is one thing but obviously training is required and this year has been incredible from a training point of view. In December, Dr Gary McKay ran the first work shop and was delighted to find the equipment had arrived in good working order.

Thankfully there wasn't too big a break between drinks. Professor Charbel Sandroussi led the second laparoscopic training course in April this year and was met with enthusiasm and skill by local surgeons. During this course, the main focus was surgical technique focusing mainly on laparoscopic cholecystectomy and appendicectomy. Following this course the first Laparoscopic appendicectomy was safely performed in the Solomon Islands by Dr Scott Siota. This feat is much more impressive when we realise that no endoloops or clips are available. This hurdle was passed with good old Solomon Island ingenuity and homemade endoloops were used with good effect.



Westmead nurse Vanessa Flores & colorectal surgeon Dr Danny Kozman, doing laparoscopic abdominoperineal resection with registrars Dr Stallone Kohia and Dr Clay Siosi

In July, I was lucky enough to be part of the next training course in the National Referral Hospital and Gizo Hospital with a wonderful team of Nurses, anaesthetist and surgeons from Australia and the Solomons. From our hotel we were greeted by the ambulance and

change room and to find that someone had found a box of pant and shirt scrubs. I was so relieved (for the patients having to see such a fright).

Together, that day, we performed several laparoscopic operations including cholecystectomy, appendicectomy, diagnostic laparoscopy and even an abdominoperineal excision of the rectum for a low rectal cancer! This process taught me to be creative with problem solving. We are delighted that our rectal cancer patient recovered well despite not having available an energy source, a stapler to ligate the vessels or bowel specific graspers.

While I travelled to the Solomons to 'teach' I feel I learnt a whole lot more that I taught.

DAISI is committed to continuing to support minimally invasive surgery which can be performed both safely and economically in the Solomon Islands. The overwhelming generosity from various organisations in donating equipment and the enthusiastic and skilled doctors and nurses in the Solomon Islands has allowed for this program to progress faster than planned. We are looking forward to continuing this progress both in Honiara and other provinces in the Solomon Islands.



Prof Charbel Sandroussi & Clay Siosi at NRH in April 2017

a never ending supply of Solomon Island hospitality and smiles. We arrived at the hospital early in the morning and when we arrived in the theatre change room, the only scrubs we could find were dresses! I donned my dress, cursed how hairy my legs were then prepared psychologically to leave the

Teaching Others to Teach Others

by Dr Santee Santhanam



I have had the good fortune of a long prosperous career in surgery, and became acquainted with DAISI, only in the last two years, where I accompanied three surgical missions to Munda, Gizo and Taro hospital.

Throughout my career, my emphasis and priorities have changed significantly. Now that I'm approaching the end of my career, the importance of making a lasting difference beyond what I myself alone can achieved is becoming all the more clear.

During my time in the Solomon Islands, the desperate need for teaching became abundantly clear to me. With a rapid rise in the number of medical graduates arriving from overseas training from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Cuba, the landscape of the medical workforce in the Solomon Islands is

changing, rapidly, perhaps faster than is manageable. It was not uncommon for the OT theatre to be so filled with so many registrars that there was standing room only, as each attempted to get a glimpse of the first laparoscopic cholecystectomy they had seen. This pure, youthful inquisitiveness took me back in time to memories of my own training as a young surgical trainee, and

Realising how impressionable and respectful junior trainees are when they are thirsty for learning, emphasises what an incredible privilege it is to be able to teach surgery to them, knowing that these students will in turn develop and mature, and eventually teach others. This catalytic process could see an entire nation such as the Solomon Islands, have ten, or twenty or even one



Dr Santee Santhanam teaching medical student Nivanka Desilva at Gizo hospital.

those memorable events where I felt privileged as a student to be one on one with my senior surgeon as he would share the skills of his craft with me.

hundred well trained surgeons over a short period of time.

The biggest challenge is to cultivate and prepare the Solomon Islands medical workforce with suitably skilled doctors that stay in the Solomon islands, in turn teaching others, and resisting the brain drain, and lure of endless possibilities that the "West" has to offer. I believe DAISI's ethos of training doctors and surgeons locally is very important in this regard. The inclusion of medical students on DAISI visits is also vital and should not be underestimated. They should always be supervised and their role mainly observational. The teaching of overseas medical students should never be at the expense of not teaching local medical students and doctors. But usually the two are mutually possible. Medical students also bring with them a youthful eagerness to these trips. As an older fella, prone to the occasional melancholy, there is nothing better than a throng of medical students asking questions inquisitively to pick up the overall morale in the operating theatre.



Registrars at National Referral Hospital (NRH) practice laparoscopic surgery on the simulator.

Volunteering with family

by Dr Alan Tong

Firstly, I would like to thank DAISI for giving me the opportunity to share with you regarding my recent voluntary medical trip to Solomon Islands. It took Dr Gary McKay almost one year of his persistent encouragement to overcome my hesitation about whether or not I should bring my family with three children (aged 7, 10, and 12 years old) along.

The decision was fully supported by my wife, Anny, who would like to explore the other side of the world. At the same time, we would also like our children to have better insights and know how blessed they are by spending some time in a land which has hardship and limited resources. Anny also had a vision to get to know and connect with the local community.

open-backed truck to visit a local beach at Urilolo Lodge. It was our first time travelling



Dr Alan Tong with his family and DAISI volunteers on way to Saeraghi Beach, West Gizo

under 45kg could not take Malaria prophylaxis, even my big girl was ineligible, the GP didn't recommend due to the possibility of any side effects on children. We bought the strongest insect repellent with 80% DEET and trusted it would work well on them. We were also being told to wear long-sleeve clothing to prevent mosquito bites, but found it unnecessary. The threats of crocodile was mentioned in Trip Advisor but you could all be reassured that it was not true according to the locals.

Despite our short stay for only 8 days on the Gizo island, my kids found the trip extraordinary. It was a real eye-opener to them; in seeing how people could live and adapt to such an environment. When they returned to Sydney, they enjoyed their hot water shower, delicious and wide selection of food, and their comfortable beds. We all hope to visit Solomon Islands again in the years to come.

I would like to express my thanks to the medical team from Sydney; led by Dr David Knox, Dr Leo Lacy, Dr Simon Koh, Dr Araz Boghossian, Dr Michelle Yu, and medical students Mandy Wang, Francis Ratnakumar, & Sophia Hill. And not to forget our joint venture with the local medical staff, which was led by Dr Leeanne Panisi. We worked together joyfully as a team, learning and supporting well with each other. We came across with many challenges and had the issues resolved accordingly. Finally, a special thank you to all, who had helped to entertain my kids throughout the trip. Your love and care will always be remembered.



Dr Harry Lam and his son Lucas doing photography at Fatboys resort, Gizo.

It was a rough journey on the way to Gizo, including flight delays in each transit, hot and humid weather, physical exhaustion, and an unexpected power outage on arrival. However, the rest of the trip was fantastic. Our kids enjoyed the early start and came along with the team to Gizo Hospital. They loved helping out, when appropriate, watching us operate and seeing how we provided care to patients.

On one Saturday, the lady at Rekona Lodge (where we stayed) helped us to arrange an

on such a people-mover and the road was really rough and bumpy. We passed the villages and the local people were all friendly waving to us. The beach was magnificent where the water was clean and fresh. Most of us dived into the water and had a go on the canoe or kayak. All of us, big and small, enjoyed immersing ourselves into the water.

There was limited information about Gizo that we could find on the internet. Mosquito bites - that might lead to Malaria or Dengue fever, was our major concern. As children



Treasurer's Report

By Dr Sepehr Lajevardi

The 2016/17 financial year has seen a rapid expansion of activities for DAISI with 11 trips during this period and 67 volunteers visiting the Solomon Islands and performing over 437 operations and screening over 700 cases. Our net income from donations was \$133'422.70 and our expenditures on the trips was \$125'071.00. This predominantly included money spent on transport and

WHERE MONEY RAISED IS BEING SPENT

93%

93% of raised money has gone towards providing the Solomon islands with specialist volunteers. This includes flight and accommodation for volunteers.

4.1%

4.1% of money raised has gone towards paying for the shipping of 3 containers of donated medical supplies to the Solomon Islands...

2.9%

2.9% of money raised has gone towards paying for administrative costs including medical registration, and accounting fees.

MAIN AREAS OF EXPENSE

Transportation	Accommodation
Shipping Freight	Medical supplies
Surgical gowns	Medical Registration

accommodation for volunteers. We also spent \$5'500.00 on the shipment of much needed equipment and supplies to the Solomon Islands including one container of laparoscopic devices, C-arm x-ray machine, and two anaesthetic machines. We are currently in talks with Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and The Rotary Club NSW for a more regular funding source and looking forward to the upcoming DAISI fundraising charity ball which will support the purchase and shipment of an ambulance and much needed medical supplies for the province of Malaita. We are also looking forwards to expanding our reach into all provinces of the Solomon Islands in close collaboration with the Solomon Ministry of Health to make a contribution to the health of the people of the Solomon Islands.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- DAISI is a registered tax deductible Charity with the ATO
- Liaison with RACS & DEFAT to secure regular funding for DAISI projects.
- Completion of log books after each surgical visit to provide evidence for ongoing funding
- Seek college grant to allow scholarships for surgical trainees from the Solomon Islands.

A Nursing Perspective

By Vanessa Flores



Nurses Deima Keblikaite & Vanessa Flores at NRH in July 2017

My volunteering trip to Solomon Islands was very eye-opening, humbling and quite different to anything I've experienced. I had the opportunity to work as a scrub/scout nurse at National Referral Hospital in Honiara and at Gizo Hospital in my one-week trip. In both facilities, I learnt to adapt to the different theatre nursing skills and responsibilities they possessed. For example, I had to wash my own used instruments after every case; this was much contrasted to back home where I was used to it being sent straight away to Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD). Their low supply of resources called for a basic way of nursing in which dressings used were as simple as gauze and tape. Learning from one another emphasised the relationship of the nursing between two cultures, as I also had the chance to share my knowledge in laparoscopic surgery. This involved me showing the nurses how to

assemble reusable forceps and trocars, as well as assisting in the creation of DIY Endo-loops, which further highlight the need to adapt to their modest way of surgery. In my short time there, I was humbled enough to be the scrub nurse of Solomon Island's first laparoscopic abdominoperineal resection on an elderly woman who had travelled to Honiara from the province upon hearing about the visit of DAISI.

Overall, I come home with a very grateful heart and a greater appreciation for the simple things that I take for granted. Despite my initial fear and nervousness, I definitely look forward to another trip with DAISI to witness the doctors and nurses of Solomon Islands conquer laparoscopic surgery and continue to execute patient-centred care.

Plastic Surgery in Solomon Islands

By Prof Peter Haertsch

I have enjoyed the privilege and good fortune to have been participated in almost 50 surgical trips to the Asia-Pacific region.

My first trip to the Solomon Islands was in 1991 and again in 1994. I had the pleasure of working with Swiss surgeon Dr Hermann Oberli based in Honiara. He had an interest in trauma and orthopaedics surgery and was very keen to teach and train the local health staff. I recall doing a combined case with him for reconstruction of a lower limb injury where he applied an external fixator and I



DAISI member and plastic surgeon Prof Peter Haertsch who volunteered in the Solomon Islands on many occasions.

that it was for the 'bad pus' as the locals were susceptible to abscess formation as a result of skin infections. It made me think as to whether

opportunity to teach the local doctors basic surgical skills on missions such as these so that we can continue to make significant impact on the lives of many. Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime!



DAISI volunteer Dr Yumiko Kadota at National Referral Hospital in July 2017

did a cross leg fasciocutaneous flap to cover the defect.

Initially we were there at the height of the Bougainville crisis and there was a certain risk associated with treating wounded liberation fighters which made our work challenging. Dr Oberli eventually left in 2003 as a result of the ethnic warfare and the pressures that this created for him. I recall the other issue at the time was with the doctors' pay. Many doctors were resigning from the hospital to work in ambulance clinics as they were paid more.

I had never seen a 'pus' room before but one existed at the main hospital. I was informed

this is good or laudable pus!

As a result of my second trip to Gizo I was able to organise for a young girl who was bitten by a crocodile to come back to Sydney for reconstructive surgery at Concord Hospital on her leg.

It is always a privilege to be in a place where you are able to radically change the life of a person. Even more rewarding is the



DAISI treasurer and volunteer and plastics trainee Dr Sepehr Lajevardi in Gizo after doing a tendon transfer.