

Volunteer support for training programmes in the West Pacific

The following is a report on projects in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands which are assisted by volunteers and donations from Australia.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

There are a number of training programmes either about to commence or planned for Papua New Guinea. These include the new BDS programme, the Bachelor of Oral Health programme and the Diploma in Dental Technology.

As reported in the *News Bulletin* (August 2005) there are eight students in the BDS programme. Currently in their final year, they have achieved good results so far and are expected to pass the final exams in November. Professor Lindsay Richards has agreed to act as the external examiner for this first group of students.

Teaching is assisted by presentations by a number of visiting volunteer dental specialists including, Associate Professor Hien Ngo and Dr Geoff Knight who earlier this year provided

- top class lectures and workshops;
- Dr Ivan Darby (periodontist) visited in May;
- Professor Paul Abbott (endodontist) is visiting in August;
- Dr John Kibble will present on the 'conservative technique' during September;
- Dr Philippa Sawyer (paedodontist) is visiting in early October;
- and Associate Professor Bob Jones (oral and maxillofacial surgeon) later in October.

- The Brighton Rotary Club of Victoria, the Royal Melbourne Institute (RMIT) of Technology Dental Assistant training division and the Royal Melbourne Dental Hospital (RMDH) have provided support in preparing for the Certificate in Dental Chairside Assisting (DCA) course.
- The Brighton Rotary Club sponsored a six week visit by two self-trained dental assistants from Port Moresby during November and December 2005.

- With the expert guidance of the RMIT and RMDH the two dental assistants were able to further develop the curriculum as well as gain useful experiences of how dental chairside assistants can contribute effectively to patient management.

- Graduation of the first candidate at the MDS level in oral and maxillofacial surgery from the University of Papua New Guinea took place in November 2005. ANZAOMS is congratulated for the contribution their members have made to this programme which resulted in this landmark event. Many of ANZAOMS members offered to travel to PNG to assist with the training programme. Four other PNG dentists are preparing to commence the MDS training programmes at the University of PNG in 2007; two in oral and maxillofacial surgery, one in paediatric remedial orthodontics, and one in advanced restorative (repair of broken down dentitions using mainly plastic materials, and endodontics).

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These programmes will involve 'twinning programmes' with an Australian dental school.

Finally, a Rotary 'Donations in Kind' container of dental stools, computers, and eight dental chairs urgently needed in both PNG and Bougainville arrived recently in PNG. These will be installed by the medical instrument technician whose training was sponsored by an Adelaide Rotary Club together with assistance from the South Australian Dental Service (SADS).

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Local training projects for dental staff in the Solomon Islands first commenced over a decade ago by members of Dental Care to Share from Australia Inc (DCS), a small group of staff from the Adelaide University Dental School and SADS.

The aim was to assist the Solomon Islands Dental Service staff to break free from the cycle of extraction which was due to extreme deficiencies in staff numbers, equipment and materials as well as more patients than they could manage. A dental public health programme was developed in conjunction with four dentists and six dental therapists who were responsible for the oral health of the 450 000 residents of the Solomon Islands. The first priority was to commence an Oral Health Promotion programme.

Due to dental staff shortages and in consultation with the Ministry of Education, oral health education was made a major topic for teachers in primary schools to be instructed in by dental staff. Instruction manuals were prepared and tested in a small number of schools, with minor changes recommended. Requests for teaching 'flash' cards in dental health topics were met and project work programmes prepared for children. Unfortunately, civil war broke out as the programme was about to be launched across the country. The latest unrest has again disrupted this programme.

Although the programme is yet to be launched, planning has spurred the Solomon Island Government to increase staff numbers and commence WHO sponsored training programmes for the Island's dental staff in Australia.

In consultation with the First Secretary for Medical Services, it was agreed

that all medical nurses will receive oral health training particularly in ways to manage dental emergencies. Also a nurses' manual was prepared, tested and requests received to greatly expand it to include oral manifestations of HIV/AIDS, oral ulcers, etc. However, its introduction has also stalled with the current unrest.

Both manuals provide text, colour diagrams and clinical examples of topics relating to the structure of the teeth and supporting bony structures, eruption times of teeth, descriptions and diagrams to explain periodontal disease and dental caries and how to prevent and control them. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of diet, particularly sufficient protein in the diet during pregnancy and early infancy. There is developing evidence that a protein deficient diet at these times can increase the risk of periodontal disease, a condition commonly seen in many tropical developing countries.

The manuals also discuss the increased risk of developing oral cancer with frequent use of betel nut with lime.

Adelaide Rotary Club has provided financial support for this programme. Both manuals can be used by any group involved in 'not for profit' work in any developing country. Some aspects need to be changed for different countries. Already they have been used extensively in PNG, and other Pacific Island countries. Dental professionals working in South East Asia have asked for them to be translated and most participants in the annual Inter-Med teaching programme held in Adelaide ask to use them. Inter-med is a not for profit organization that provides emergency and primary care medicine, dentistry and nursing courses for those trained in a health care area who are volunteering to work in projects organized by Christian churches in developing countries.

Dental Care to Share has also provided instruction to Solomon Island dental staff in the Atraumatic Restorative Technique (ART) method of restoration placement as well as general updates in current dental concepts relevant to that country. The GC company and SDI have been able to provide starter materials for ART demonstrations, i.e., powder/liquid mix self setting GICs, though adequate warning is needed

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members will be receiving notice of membership renewal in the near future.

Pursuant to the Constitution of the Australian Dental Association Incorporated, a member is obligated to pay an annual subscription in advance. Such subscription will become due and payable on 1 July each year.

When completing the subscription notice, members are asked to take care to identify the category of membership they wish to apply for.

In the past, cases have arisen where members have changed membership status from active member to one of the concessional categories. When notifying the ADA of this change, a claim is made for a rebate of this subscription.

As provision of rebates causes budgetary difficulties on the part of the Branches and Federal Office, members are encouraged to accurately identify the category of membership they wish to apply for when renewing their subscription.

Federal Executive has the discretion to remit the payment of whole or part of any such Federal subscription in exceptional circumstances only.

Robert Boyd-Boland
Chief Executive Officer

as these materials are not readily available in Australia.

John McIntyre AM

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Members interested in becoming involved in any of the above programmes, who have not already registered their interest, can contact Dr John McIntyre on email: john.mcintyre@adelaide.edu.au after mid September 2006. Or they can register their interest by contacting the ADA Inc Special Purpose Committee on Dental Volunteers who are establishing a database of all volunteer projects (for details see February 2006, News Bulletin, page 25); email: adainc@ada.org.au