



**UPDATE ON POSTGRADUATE CLINICAL TRAINING AT CMNHS,
FNU**

SUMMARY

The College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) currently has 114 regional postgraduate enrolments into clinical programmes offered in semester 1 & 2 of 2021. Regional postgraduate students are enrolled in medical, dental, allied health, nursing, public health and primary care programmes across all 5 Schools of the College and from the following countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. CMNHS plans to extend teaching of programmes in-country to select sites with adequate clinical supervisory staff and infrastructure; and intends to offer in 2022 new programmes in psychiatry, intensive care medicine, health counselling and dentistry. There will also be Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses available in dental and clinical lab technology; enrolled nursing and pharmacy assisting.

1. BACKGROUND

- The Fiji National University (FNU) has a well-established undergraduate medical training institution that dates to 1885. Postgraduate training for doctors began in 1997-1998 in various disciplines¹.
- Formerly known as the Fiji School of Medicine, the FNU's College Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) has been providing work-ready, fit for purpose medical, nursing, dental and allied health graduates for the Pacific region's health workforce.
- Currently, CMNHS delivers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in a wide range of medical specialties, public health/primary care, allied health, dentistry, and nursing.
- In addition, CMNHS through the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR) manages and coordinates design and implementation of research by students and staff across the region, in priority areas as an assessed component of their study, and to inform health policy.
- On average 2,500 students graduate from CMNHS annually. Between 18-20% of these graduates are from the region (outside of Fiji).
- Most regional students come from the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, and Vanuatu. Other Pacific countries (PICs) that have their students enlisted at CMNHS include PNG, Timor-Leste, Samoa, American Samoa, Marshall Is, Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu, Niue, Tokelau, and Nauru.
- COVID-19 pandemic has impacted CMNHS' clinical programme delivery. Due to the marked increase in community transmission of COVID-19 in Fiji, there were lockdowns and cessation of face-to-face teaching and lack of access to clinical facilities since the middle of semester 1.
- However, CMNHS had put in place mechanisms to ensure the ongoing provision of quality teaching which included continuance of online theoretical learning while awaiting access to the clinical facilities. In some cases, the commencement of virtual clinical teaching had already commenced.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Since October 4, 2021, there has been a phased re-opening of CMNHS campuses that is allowing final year students in various programmes access for face-to-face lab and virtual clinical lab sessions.
- Since September 20, 2021, the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services allowed our regional medical Postgraduate students back to the clinical floor.

¹ Oman, K. M., et al. (2009). "Specialist training in Fiji: Why do graduates migrate, and why do they remain? A qualitative study." *Human Resources for health* 7(1): 1-10.

- There are plans to extend teaching to regional sites with adequate support for clinical teaching (including supervisors, infrastructure, and ICT). Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are being explored for delivery of select medical and dental programmes, while Tuvalu and Kiribati for enrolled nursing programmes and for the Leadership in Nursing courses to be offered online to the region.
- The first cohort of the PG Diploma in Emergency Nursing started in semester 1 of 2021 and the Masters Programme is intended to run in 2022.
- CMNHS tends to develop and strengthen provision of in country and CMNHS facilities with equipment for telehealth, tele-simulation and other virtual learning and teaching.
- CMNHS is in the process of developing COVID-19 related short courses for leadership during a Pandemic, day-to-day business continuity during a pandemic, and other relevant health-related courses in different modes to suit needs.
- CMNHS will also develop and deliver short courses on Covid -19 and other Pandemic including Outbreak Management and Leadership, Mass Casualty Management, Post-Incident in Phased Population and Public Health Responses, Risk Communication, Management Processes, Nutrition, Mental Health and SRH in Emergencies, Gender Based Violence, Climate Change and Health Information; also an MBA in Health.
- CMNHS is also focusing on the delivery of TVET courses for health, including clinical dental technology, clinical lab technology, enrolled nursing and pharmacy assisting.
- There are new programmes being developed in psychiatry, intensive care medicine, health counselling as well as perioperative and surgical nursing.
- COVID-19 related research currently being undertaken by FIPHR has the potential to impact on Maternal and Child Healthcare as well as clinical services delivery and practice.

3. CHALLENGES

- Continued online learning and teaching during the COVID outbreak and with the implementation of COVID restrictions.
- Limited access to the clinical floor for PG regional students.
- Delivery of programmes in-country where possible (suitable clinical and research supervisors and case load and case mix).
- Meeting clinical requirements and competencies.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Pacific Directors of Clinical Services are invited to:

- Acknowledge and support the CMNHS plans for extension of teaching sites to the region; its development and delivery of relevant COVID-19 related short courses; and new programme development.
- Recognise the need for collaboration and advance this initiative with CMNHS to support relevant in-country teaching of postgraduate programmes through MOUs and other means.
- Facilitate identification of appropriate candidates to undertake CMNHS programmes and short courses.
- Assist CMNHS in programme development through the provision of workforce plans to ensure that training is appropriate and adequate for regional health needs.

4.2 Development partners are invited to:

- Support CMNHS in the development and delivery of COVID-19 and other relevant programmes and short courses.
- Explore other opportunities for the support of in-country training of select CMNHS clinical programmes.
- Strengthen PICTs ability to engage suitable candidates in relevant CMNHS programmes both in-country and in Fiji.