

Directors of Clinical Services Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des services cliniques



“The Journey of Perioperative Nursing in the Pacific.”

Perioperative Nursing in the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) has developed significantly over the last six years. These include the publication of the first edition of Pacific Perioperative Standards Manual and the first cohort nurses enrolled in the graduate certificate in perioperative nursing to graduate towards the end 2022.

Other significant achievements include:

- The formation of the only regional nursing specialty group – the Pacific Islands Perioperative Operating Room Nurses Association (PIORNA).
- The development of a pacific regional mentoring network and widening perioperative networks.

1. BACKGROUND

The Pacific perioperative journey began in 2015 when wide variations in perioperative nursing practices were reported by Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) teams visiting Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). A collaborative effort between the Clinical Services Program (CSP), RACS, Health Education and Learning Partnerships (HELPS), Australian College of Perioperative Nursing (ACORN) and the Ministries of Health (MoH) in the PICTs initiated the process of developing practice standards suitable for the Pacific perioperative environment.

ACORN standards and the International Federation of Perioperative Nurses (IFPN) guidelines were the basis of the Pacific perioperative standards of which experienced senior perioperative nurses from the region worked with Australian perioperative consultants to adapt it to the Pacific working environment without lowering the quality of standards.

During these working group meetings, and implementation workshops the formation of a regional organisation was triggered. The Pacific Islands Operating Room Nurses Association (PIORNA) was registered in February 2019 in Samoa.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1: The Pacific Perioperative Practice Standards

The Pacific standards were developed in three stages known as bundle 1: - Infection prevention in 2016, bundle 2: - Patient Care in 2019, and bundle 3: - Environmental Care in 2020. At each developmental stage, expert perioperative nurses from PICTs selected by their various MoH worked tirelessly with Australian perioperative nurse consultants to ensure that the standards were suited for the Pacific environment.

Training of Trainers (TOT) implementation workshops was conducted. TOTs would then return to their home islands to organise in-country training for their colleagues.

- The Pacific perioperative standards manual published (e-copy and paperback) which contains a total of 16 practice standards.
- 42 TOTs across 14 PICTs
- Eight of TOT enrolled in the graduate certificate in perioperative nursing program offered through the Australian College of Nurses (ACN).

2.2 The Pacific Islands Operating Room Nurses Association (PIORNA)

The formation of the first regional specialty nursing association resulted from like-minded colleagues who wanted a forum to discuss and comment matters affecting their practice and to promote activities that provide mutual assistance, exchange of information, continuing education, peer review and research.

Networks with ACORN was fostered and widened through the attendance to ACORN conferences. Through these established networks, PIORNA's membership to the International Federation of Perioperative Nurses (IFPN) was facilitated.

- PIORNA was officially registered as a society under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Labour – Samoa Incorporated Societies Ordinance 1952 in April 2019. Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic the meeting and conference that was planned for August 2020 was cancelled.
- PIORNA has full membership status with the IPFN. A benefit of this affiliation means that PIORNA through IPFN has a direct voice at the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

2.3 Mentoring and Networks

A mentoring process started spontaneously with the external nursing consultants guiding the pacific nurses in the development and implementation of perioperative standards. This progressed into in-country face-to-face mentoring, with 3 to 5 nurses closely working with the external consultant. Some of the mentored nurses then visited their colleagues in other PICTs, became mentors to their pacific colleagues. This experience provided greater appreciation and understanding for each other's working environment.

- International and regional networks established and maintained.
- Consideration for labour mobility within the pacific region to address scarce skills in the operating room is more of a possibility as nurses practice under the same set of perioperative standards.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Geography, diversity, and remoteness

The Pacific islands are some of the most remote and geographical dispersed islands. They are also very diverse in the level of perioperative services provided. The smaller PICTS provide basic operating rooms services as most of their major surgeries are conducted overseas to the larger PICTS who can

provide specialised surgery. Maintaining a nurses skill set to assist in a wide range of surgeries can be very difficult when these surgeries are not routinely provided in some hospitals.

3.2 Communication and reliable internet services

Many of PICTs still have unreliable yet very expensive internet services. The importance of good communication and a reliable internet service was revealed during the COVID 19 pandemic. The closure of borders made PICTs rely heavily on good communication and reliable internet services for consultation, management and treatment and continuing nursing education.

3.3 COVID-19 cancelled AGM

Since PIORNA was established in 2019, there is still an interim committee in place as plans for an Annual General Meeting had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Recommendations for governments:

1. To support more scholarships for Pacific nurses to undertake post graduate studies in perioperative nursing.
2. To support the development for hospital-based learning centres with reliable internet services for online learning and access to continuing professional development.
3. To support exchange programs of perioperative nurses to help maintain and upgrade nursing skills set in operating theatres

4.2 Recommendations for development partners:

1. To support mentorship programs with perioperative experts from Australasian colleges/facilities to build local capacity
2. To support the development of PIORNA to grow under the guidance of a well-established organisation for example ACORN.