

# Pacific Heads of Health

## *Réunion des directeurs de la santé du Pacifique*

### **Health Workforce Training – Updates from the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Fiji National University**

#### **At a glance**

- The College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS) at the Fiji National University (FNU) continues to train the health workforce for the region through its 75 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in various areas of medicine, public/allied health, dentistry and nursing.
- For Semester 1 2023, out of 2,621 enrolled students, 84% are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, 75% are females and 14% are from the neighbouring Pacific Island Countries
- New programmes that were approved by the FNU Senate in 2022 and are on offer now are the Postgraduate Diploma in Perioperative Nursing; Postgraduate Diploma in Community Health Nursing; Master of Intensive Care Medicine (subspecialty); Master of Psychiatry; and Certificate in Health Professions Foundation Studies.
- Several PIC's have requested FNU for in-country delivery of several specific clinical postgraduate programmes – these are namely Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Midwifery, Nurse Practitioner training & Enrolled Nursing. FNU teams have visited these countries and have provided recommendations on the requested in-country support.
- Through the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR) located within the CMNHS, regional research projects and training initiatives continue to be progressed, which are resulting research capacity building and research dissemination through publications, conference presentations, etc.
- For 2024, a PG Diploma in Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) is anticipated to go on offer, while we keep progressing discussions on the MMED Orthopedics and the development of a Radiology programme, in addition to planned short courses.

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### Future vision

Aligned with FNU's Strategic Pillar 1 "Education for Employability", we at the CMNHS are intent on working with stakeholders in Fiji and the region, on creating curriculum that is aligned to the industry requirements, national workforce plans and developments, as well as progressive technical changes in the respective curricular specialties. These will ensure the currency and relevance of our academic programmes to the aspirations of the SDG target 3c (health workforce), target 3.8 (UHC) and the guiding principles of the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy.

FNU's Strategic Pillar 2, "Research with Real-World Impact", has also driven the focus of research at the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR), to partner with regional government, non-government, and civil society organizations, to ensure that communities, as the beneficiaries of most of our health research, are part of the co-design and implementation of research projects, and the dissemination of findings. Equally important research projects are carried out by students in all our Masters programmes, all of which are presented back to the respective "sources of data", some of which also gets published. FNU also launched its HDR Masters and PhD programmes in late 2020, an anticipated additional source of higher quality research in our countries.

### Programmes for information and research dissemination:

- Health Professions Education Symposium: June 28-30, Holiday Inn Suva
- Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium: Sep 4-6, followed by manuscript writing workshop on Sep 7-8, Nadi

### Examples of recent progress

#### Learning and Teaching

- ✓ First batch of Masters in Emergency Nursing in 2022 (1 from Tonga). Second batch now (2023), with 3 regional students (Vanuatu-2 and Kiribati-1).
- ✓ First batch of MMED in Intensive Care Medicine started this year (2 candidates from Tonga).
- ✓ First batch of MMED Dermatology expected to graduate Dec 2024
- ✓ First batch of Masters in SRH to graduate this year (1 student from Tonga)
- ✓ First batch Cert IV Community Nutrition 2022 – plans are being considered to offer this online
- ✓ First batch of Cert IV in Health Professions Foundation Studies (Tonga – 2; Tuvalu – 3; Vanuatu – 1)
- ✓ First batch of Postgraduate Diploma in Perioperative Nursing to begin in Sem 2, 2023
- ✓ First batch of Postgraduate Diploma in Community Health Nursing to begin in Sem 2, 2023
- ✓ PhD programme – 3 regional students enrolled from 2022

#### Research

- ✓ Communicable Diseases Research Centre (CDRC) launched in 2022 (under banner of the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research)
- ✓ Soft launch of FNU/CMNHS Data Repository on April 19, 2023
- ✓ PASS Fiji study (Large-scale serosurveys) launched in 2022
- ✓ Serosurvey research container laboratory received and for official opening end of April 2023

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### **Recommendations to be considered by the Heads of Health**

#### **Recommendations for governments**

1. Delays in release of offer letters for regional students (especially for MBBS prog) is usually due to waiting time for confirmation of scholarships from countries. FNU is usually advised that the government has scholarships available for those students, requesting FNU for offer letters. Often, these students have not met the necessary minimum entry requirements, so it is advisable for governments to not offer conditional scholarships without a letter from FNU
2. Delays in confirmation of offer letters for applicants are also due to incomplete application forms, and submission of full required application documents, before the close of applications (normally end of November)
3. To support calls for programme advisory board membership – to ensure FNU programmes capture regional industry perspectives

#### **Recommendations for development partners**

1. To support regional marketing of programmes, and consider sponsorship of a number of students to programmes that are currently running on low student intake (MMED Psychiatry; M-SRH)