

Director of Clinical Services Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des services cliniques

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Information Paper N°3



BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE THROUGH EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP IN PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

16 – 17 August 2023, Time: 12.00-3.00pm FJ Time; virtual meeting

CMNHS FNU-POSTGRADUATE TRAINING UPDATE 2023

Paper presented by Dr William May
Item N° 3.1

This paper highlights the key 2023 updates for our Directors of Clinical Services representatives from each Pacific Island Country. The paper provides a helicopter view of the PG training programmes, key achievements, challenges, and some recommendations.

Dr William May
Dean CMNHS

1. BACKGROUND

The College of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences began its postgraduate training more than twenty years ago. Since then, its postgraduate programme portfolio has increased over the years in both the clinical training areas and in Public Health and Primary Care. There are currently 60 PG programmes offered at the CMNHS including the Doctor of Philosophy. Thirty-four programmes are in the clinical areas and twenty-six programmes are in public health-related fields. Eight clinical programmes are in the field of nursing, one in physiotherapy, two in oral health/dentistry and two in dermatology and twenty-one are from the major traditional clinical disciplines of surgery, internal Medicine, Anaesthesia, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Paediatrics, etc

In the last three years, the College cumulatively enrolled one thousand five hundred and thirty-four (1534) students both as new students and continuing students in its post-graduate programmes. In 2021 we enrolled 473 students of which 21% are from the region. Half of the total regional students are enrolled in clinical programmes. In 2022 531 students did postgraduate studies with us and 530 students as of July 18, 2023. Thirty per cent (30%) and twenty-one per cent (21%) of PG students enrolled at CMNHS were from the region in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The College has enrolled both coursework postgraduate and high-degree research students over the past four years. We have continued to respond to the regional call for PG in-country studies where it is deemed feasible. Programme viability, clinical materials, reliable distance communication and the presence of willing supervisors are some of the major factors determining the delivery of clinical programmes.

We have delivered the in-country nursing programme in Tonga and applied similar concepts to the delivery of in-country enrolled nursing programmes in Tuvalu.

This year the College began delivering its bridging midwifery programme to the Republic of Marshall Islands. This was followed by in-country delivery of the midwifery programme in semester 2 2023.

We have started the delivery of the enrolled Nursing programme to Nauru in semester 2 2023 in response to the workforce needs raised by our PICs. There are currently two nursing staff based in Nauru over the next two months. It is interesting to note that the University is also engaged in training and upskilling the people of Nauru in other areas of Technical and vocational training through its Pasifika TVET programme, while we

address the health human resource needs in parallel to other assistance that the University is offering to Nauru.

Some of the new PGs on offer are the Master in Critical Care Medicine, Masters in Dermatology, PG Diploma in Community Health Nursing, PG Diploma in Perioperative Nursing, and the Master of Psychiatry scheduled to be presented at the November Senate before delivery in Semester 1 2024. The other new programmes that are earmarked for offering next year are the Masters in Nurse Practitioner programme, Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dentistry, Postgraduate Diploma in Enrolled Nursing to replace the Certificate IV programme and Postgraduate Diploma in Intensive Care Nursing.

We are in negotiations with the Cook Islands Ministry of Health to work out the training requirements and the best way to deliver the midwifery programme to its identified health workers. Due to the current demands, we plan to stagger the training for each country to ensure we have sufficient trainers available from the College. We anticipate that there will be demand from other PICs soon.

The College and Ministry of Health Radiology staff are in negotiations with the University of Papua New Guinea regarding the PG in Radiology programme. We have shortlisted overseas candidates for the PG in Pathology Programme. Unless we have staff on the ground to coordinate and finalise this programme, we will not include it in our list of offerings yet.

We signed an MOA with the ASPEN (Health Care Fiji) hospital in Lautoka and Ba in July this year. Some of our PG trainees are based in the West. As part of the MOA the ASPEN hospital will work with the Fiji Immigration Department to employ regional postgraduate students who are posted to the Lautoka hospital for training. An update will be provided when we have further progress in this.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the support from DFAT through our Regional Office and the PCSWHIP2 programme to the CMNHS and the other partners for the assistance to the College.

3. CHALLENGES

The request for delivery of in-country programmes will be managed in a way to ensure sufficient trainers are available for both the Suva and Pacific Island country's candidates. Managing multiple requests that strain our institutional capacity is an area we need to discuss. This is highlighted below in the request to Governments section.

- PG trainees to adapt to the hospital requirements from ASPEN and the Ministry of Health in Fiji and home countries.

- Late registration with the Fiji Medical Council is to be facilitated in advance before the trainees arrive in Fiji so that clinical practice is not affected.
- The disparity in the “treatment” of PG regional students by the different training facilities could influence student training preferences and programmes may need to consider the impact on resources for training.
- Staffing remains a challenge in some of the areas e.g. ENT and Pathology

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1. Recommendations for governments:

The current trends in workforce mobility are a challenge for all PICs. The effect and pressure are also felt by training institutions.

It would be helpful to the College if countries can share their individual annual training needs plan with training institutions ahead of time -preferably not less than 12 months in advance. Training institutions may not be able to accommodate requests at short notice especially when similar training needs are requested from PICs e.g. Enrolled Nursing and Midwifery

Planning for PG training requires advanced registrations with the Country Medical Council. If Ministries could ensure this administration requirement is managed before the student arrives, that would be good for trainees.

4.2. Recommendations for development partners:

Consider exploring support for “hard-to-get trainers” in Nursing and Clinical Programmes where there is scarcity or no availability of a Pacific pool to recruit from. An example of such a case study in point is the current support for the PG Diploma in Otolaryngology. The College would be happy to discuss this recommendation further with development partners.