

# Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

## Réunion des directeurs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

### **NURSES TOGETHER: A FORCE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH**

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### **Update of Postgraduate Nursing Training Program at School of Nursing, Fiji National University**

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#### Agenda Item N° 3.1

From 2018 to 2023, the School of Nursing at Fiji National University (FNU) have developed and rolled out three (3) new postgraduate diploma programmes and two (2) new masters programmes in nursing. All postgraduate programmes developed at School of Nursing align course learning outcomes to the standards included in the Fiji Nursing specialization framework and the Fiji Nursing Council domains and standards for postgraduate programmes which has led to improved numbers of enrolments and graduates, as well as anecdotal evidence towards improved health service delivery.

The School of Nursing faces continued challenges to recruiting nursing experts who would provide advice and guidance when specialized postgraduate clinical programmes are developed and deliver teaching of postgraduate programmes. Nurses with specialised training face difficulties in recognition which could be better addressed by actioning the Specialization Framework in Nursing in Fiji for nurse recognition and improved retention.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The School of Nursing (SoN), Fiji National University (FNU) is the leading nursing training institution in Fiji, with over 700 students enrolled in its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes every year. Postgraduate programmes developed in the SoN are aligned to the [FNU's strategic plan 2021 – 2026](#) on Pillar 1 Education for Employability. FNU is committed to producing work-ready graduates at post-graduate levels, with the skills, knowledge, competencies, aptitudes, and behaviours necessary to succeed in a competitive jobs market. Programmes developed are inclusive in nature and not only captures the population health needs of the Fijian community but also considers regional health workforce needs. One important reference document that programme developers use to address regional countries nursing health needs is the Model for Specialised Nursing Practice for the Pacific developed with [SPCNMOA](#) in 2018.

Prior to 2018 only four (4) Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) programmes were on offer from the school. This trend changed dramatically after the development of the [Fiji Nursing Specialisation Framework](#) by the nursing division of Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) Fiji, and [curricular domains and standards for PGD programmes](#) by the [Fiji Nursing Council](#) (FNC). This allowed curriculum developers at the school to clearly demarcate standards of practice for a PGD graduate from graduates with Masters level studies, and Nurse Practitioners.

## 2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### 2.1 Increase in number and quality of postgraduate nursing programmes

From 2018 to 2023, the School of Nursing have developed and rolled out three (3) new postgraduate diploma programmes and two (2) new master's programmes making a total of nine (9) postgraduate nursing programmes currently being offered. The new offerings are:

- Postgraduate Diploma of Community Health Nursing
- Postgraduate Diploma of Perioperative Nursing
- Postgraduate Diploma of Emergency Nursing
- Masters in Emergency Nursing
- Masters in Nurse Practitioner (from semester 1, 2024).

The SoN has continued to respond to the regional call for postgraduate in-country nursing studies where it is deemed feasible. The school also began delivering its bridging midwifery programme and in-country midwifery programme to the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) and last month MoU has been signed for delivery of in country midwifery programme to Cook Islands. Delivery of the enrolled nursing programme to Nauru also commenced this year and probably with Tuvalu for 2024. CHMNS is currently in negotiations to deliver nursing programmes to other PICTs across the region.

The addition of these programs has helped to revitalize the research portfolio for the SoN, for first time, the school delivered 5 oral presentations and 3 poster presentations at the 2023 Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium (PIHRS).

## **2.2 Increase in postgraduate nursing enrolments and graduates**

The mobility of skilled nursing workforce in Fiji increased from 2021, with over 700 nurses resigning in 2022 from service with MHMS. This has been unprecedented and greatly impacted service delivery as most of these nurses were experienced practitioners in their specialized areas of work. This turn of events with nursing workforce mobility created demand for more nurses to be trained in specialized areas so that standards to service delivery remains minimally affected. As a result of this, numbers of enrolment for nurses enrolling in postgraduate programmes and graduation numbers increased. 106 nurses graduated with postgraduate qualifications in 2022, an increase of 26% from 2021 (29 nurses graduated from postgraduate programmes in 2021). Informal reports received from Directors of Nursing and the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer (CNMO), indicated that graduates are contributing positively and making impact on health care service delivery.

## **3. CHALLENGES**

### **3.1 Recruitment of Nursing Staff at FNU**

With the commencement of perioperative and critical care nursing programmes, the school of nursing has faced challenges in recruiting nursing experts who would provide advice and guidance when specialized postgraduate clinical programmes are developed. Additionally, it has been difficult to recruit lecturers and professors for specialised clinical programmes and level 9 studies. Despite these challenges, the school has made working relationships with new partners as

development of postgraduate programmes have opened opportunities for collaboration with professional agencies like the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Midwifery and Health Development, the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC), the Pacific Islands Operating Room Nursing Association (PIORNA) and others.

### **3.2 Recognition of Nursing Specialties**

Nurses undertaking specialised training in nursing must be recognised as a special cadre of nurses. According to the specialization framework they are labelled as Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and Clinical Nurse Consultants (CNC). The scope of practice and job description for CNS and CNC need to be properly defined and adopted with consensus by Fiji MHMS and FNC. Nurses need to be recognised when they undertake postgraduate studies, as lack of recognition contributes to challenges of retention and the vicious cycle of training them to only lose them will continue.

## **4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

### **4.1 Recommendations for governments:**

- 4.1.1 The Specialization Framework in Nursing to be actioned for nurse recognition and retention in Fiji.
- 4.1.2 The Ministry of Health and Medical Services and Fiji Nursing Council must establish a Board of Management that will develop a structure for nursing establishment which will register, licence, and regulate speciality nursing practice in Fiji. With government invitation Nursing Academic Institutions in Fiji namely School of Nursing, FNU, TISI Sangam College of Nursing and School of Nursing University of Fiji will foster contribution towards establishing specialization in nursing practice in Fiji.

### **4.2 Recommendations for development partners:**

- 4.2.1 Development partners including DFAT, SPC, WHO, NZAID consider Fiji and regional countries with a deeper sense of understanding on nurse training investment and support to education

including technical expertise to help develop programmes at FNU considering the mobility trends of nurses in the region.

- 4.2.2 Development partners continues to explore available support for required teaching expertise in nursing programmes where there is scarcity or no availability of a Pacific pool to recruit from, whilst simultaneously building local teaching and technical expertise, to sustainably increase the teaching capacity at FNU and throughout the region for specialised nursing programmes.