



Dr Dudley Ba'erodo and Dr Alex Cato

Thanks from Solomon Islands

A visiting surgeon from the Solomon Islands has thanked Australian surgeons and hospitals for their training assistance

With a 41 per cent increase in urology admissions to the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in Honiara since 2004 and with life expectancy now slowly rising, general surgeon Dr Dudley Ba'erodo saw the need for greater urology services in the Solomon Islands and has now attained many of the skills to meet that need.

One of only three general surgeons in the country, Dr Ba'erodo first began developing his interest in urology by working along-side visiting specialists since 2002 before being offered a Rowan Nicks Scholarship to undertake a urology attachment at Tweed Hospital in 2007.

Now in the last month of another Rowan Nicks Scholarship visit, Dr Ba'erodo has spent the past year at the

Austin and Repatriation Hospitals in Melbourne learning more advanced urology surgery to enable him to treat more complex cases.

Dr Ba'erodo, the Head of Surgery at the NRH, said the greatest benefit of his latest trip to Australia had been the opportunity to learn minimally-invasive surgical techniques including the use of laser technology.

He listed his training objectives as learning the use of rigid and flexible endoscopic urology procedures, the treatment for benign prostatic hyperplasia by Transurethral Resection of Prostate (TURP), mastering the endoscopic treatment for bladder tumours and establishing a network of professional colleagues.

All, he said, had now been met.

"The urology department at the Austin Hospital is one of the biggest in Australia in terms of the service provided while the Repatriation Hospital does all the endoscopic day surgery procedures so it has been a great privilege to be able to work and learn here," he said.

"At home we are more used to open surgery so I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to broaden my skills in this area.

"While I learnt how to use a pneumatic lithoclast to break up ureteric stones in Tweed Heads, at the Repat Hospital I learned how to use the Homium laser to treat stones.

"Yet the most exciting procedure I have learnt was the use of Greenlight Laser to vaporise the prostate which is a skill that I now have in addition to the traditional TURP.

"Also on a few occasions I attended the Austin Hospital to watch laparoscopic nephrectomy and radical prostatectomy."

Upon his imminent return to the Solomon Islands, Dr Ba'erodo said he planned to establish a dedicated urology service in Honiara to provide minimally-invasive surgery, reconstructive surgery and cancer screening and management services.

He said the major obstacle remained the provision of equipment and consumables and the skills within the hospital to maintain the technology.

"After a long campaign I have convinced the government to buy some equipment to allow us to undertake more minimally-invasive surgery because it lessens the burden on the health budget by allowing for faster healing," he said.

"I have ordered a resectoscope and both a rigid and

flexible cystoscope while a colonoscope has recently been donated to the NRH by a US non-profit organisation and my colleagues and I are now also in the process of pushing the Government to buy laparoscopic equipment."

Dr Ba'erodo said that despite such continuing challenges facing surgery in the Solomon Islands, progress was being made in both the number of surgeons working in the country and the range of skills available.

He said that two general surgeons were expected to finish their training at the University of Papua New Guinea later this year before returning home, another doctor was now completing a Masters of Surgery in ENT who will become the country's first ENT specialist.

They will then add to the local surgical workforce which now comprises the three general surgeons, one orthopaedic surgeon, one ophthalmologist and three obstetricians/gynaecologists.

Dr Ba'erodo said an active campaign was also now underway to encourage more young doctors to complete a Masters of Medicine in Surgery at the University of Papua New Guinea or the National Fiji University.

He said that despite such additions to the workforce, however, specialist team visits from Australasian surgeons would still be required.

"We still don't have the capacity to cover all the specialties in the Solomon Islands and I can't really see us being in such a position for ten years," he said.

"But simply covering the workload is not the only advantage of such team visits for they also mean that we can select the most complex cases for treatment by surgeons from Australia and New Zealand and learn and improve our skills by assisting."

Dr Ba'erodo gave a presentation during the conclave at the recent ASC held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and used the occasion to thank the late Mr Rowan Nicks for his legacy and generosity in providing the means to allow surgeons to acquire the skills needed to develop their own surgical services.

"This indeed is a very noble act from a very noble man," he said.

He also thanked his mentors Associate Professor Hamish Ewing, Mr Alex Cato and Professor Don Moss along with College staff for their help in organising his visit and establishing his temporary domestic life in Melbourne.

"I would also like to sincerely thank my supervisor Associate Professor Damien Bolton and the Urology Department at the Austin and Repat Hospital," he said.

"In particular, I would like to thank the following Urologists: Dr Greg Jack, Mr Steven Clarke, Associate Professor Nathan Lawrentschuk, Mr Peter Liodakis and Dr David Sillar, my supervisor at the Tweed Hospital.

"They have been patient with me and took on the task of teaching and training me the procedures I needed to learn for which I am most grateful."

With Karen Murphy