

THE BEST FOR BURNS

Volunteers from the Australian and New Zealand Burn Association held a week-long course on the management of burn cases for 33 doctors, nurses and physiotherapists in Dili

FELLOWS JOHN HARVEY AND IAN LEITCH
WITH KAREN MURPHY

A small team of one doctor and four nurses at the Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares (HNGV) in Dili, Timor-Leste, has been the backbone for providing much needed care for burn victims. The team, led by Dr Joao Ximenes, received training and mentoring through the College's Timor-Leste Program. There will now be greater support and expertise available from the 33 doctors, nurses and physiotherapists who participated in a burns management course organised by the College and delivered at the National Hospital in August 2013.

The course, led by volunteers from the Australian and New Zealand Burn Association (ANZBA), was delivered in response to requests from the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health, HNGV and national doctors to help Timor-Leste improve its management of burns cases. It was provided as part of the College's Australian Timor-Leste Program for Secondary Services (ATLASS II), funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The HNGV receives at least one complex burns patient each week. Doctors and nurses at the national hospital can now provide the specialist care needed. However, there is still a need for better immediate care at the referral hospitals for patients presenting in the districts.

Associate Professor John Harvey from ANZBA who led the course in August 2013 said the doctors in Dili have the expertise to treat severe burns, but within limits.

"Their resources can be stretched at times given that modern burn

management is expensive and time consuming; but within basic limits they are capable of dealing with what they confront, including injured children.

"We were keen to enhance the skills of the local surgeons, but also to train the junior doctors who will soon be spreading out across the country and who will often be the first to see the injured patient."

New skills

Dr Joao Ximenes is Timor-Leste's first doctor with plastic surgery skills. He has developed his skills in both cleft and palate surgery and burns management with guidance and mentoring from long-time volunteer Dr Mark Moore. Dr Ximenes spoke of the developing workforce.

"We have a few doctors, including the three surgical Trainees being trained by the ATLASS program, who have good skills for managing burns. We also have four burns nurses who provide good care for burns. They can manage wounds in the ward, but they don't yet have the skills or knowledge about physiotherapy and how to prevent contraction."

Dr Ximenes said that following the training, he had observed the surgical Trainees assisting with burns cases, with two of the Trainees recently demonstrating a good skin graft on a large burn in the female surgical ward.

"Since 2008, burns patients and plastics patients have been my responsibility. This course was very important to improve my own skills and knowledge about burns. The course taught us to use simple materials, which we have here in Timor-Leste. We only



Fellow John Harvey with Timorese doctors

"Their resources can be stretched at times given that modern burn management is expensive and time consuming"

have limited materials and they teach us how to use what we have here.

"Every week we receive burns patients from everywhere, all over Timor-Leste."

The Trainees who took part in the course said the most important things they learnt from the course were how to manage burns patients in Emergency, how to manage airways of patients with burns to the face and neck areas, how to do a proper escharotomy, how to accurately identify the percentage of burns and how to correctly administer IV fluids to adults and children.

Members of the visiting team who delivered the course included retired Plastic Surgeon Mr Ian Leitch, Paediatric Burns Surgeon Associate Professor John Harvey, burns nurses Ms Siobhan Connolly and Ms Diane Elfleet and physiotherapist Ms Cheri Templeton.

Mr Leitch said he first heard about the need for more expertise at the Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares from Plastic Surgeon Mr Mark Moore.

"He told me that the two local doctors, Dr Joao Ximenes and Dr Joao Pedro Xavier, were finding that an increase in the number and severity of burns cases was straining their resources, so we got together to see how we could help solve the problem.

"We decided that a modified form of the Emergency Management of Severe Burns (EMSB) course would be the most useful, given language barriers and so instead of a one-day course, this training spanned a working week and was designed to be taught as an integrated course by surgeons, nurses and a physiotherapist to emphasise the team approach which characterises modern burn care."

Mr Leitch, who has had a long association with Timor-Leste since he first went there in 2000 as surgeon to the UN Military Hospital, said that it was this melding of formal instruction and practical real-time teaching in the operating theatres and wards that was found to be most valuable for the participants.

He also said that demonstrating alternative management strategies in a clinical situation and then subsequently being able to show the result had been a powerful educational tool.

Associate Professor John Harvey, also a member of the visiting team, is Head of the Burns unit at the Children's Hospital at Westmead and has taught the EMSB course in a number of countries including Fiji, Singapore, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

He said the guiding principle behind it and the modified course was to set down

burn management principles that could be followed for every burn including initial first aid, resuscitation, assessing the depth of the burn, infection control, graft surgery and the management of scars and contractures.

He said he and Mr Leitch acted only as advisors in theatre to the local doctors during the August visit.

"We were scrubbed and at the table, but all the surgery was done by local doctors," he said.

"We advised on techniques and made suggestions and in theatre and during ward rounds discussed when to conduct graft surgery and how to do it."

"The timing of the visit fortuitously coincided with the presence of a number of patients with acute burns at different stages of resolution and an acute admission of a child with a 20 per cent deep flame burn." ▶

International Forum at the RACS 2014 Annual Scientific Congress

Sands Expo and Convention Center, Marina Bay Sands in Singapore

Monday 5th & Tuesday 6th May

Theme: Working together for our patients

Convenor: Glenn Guest

The 2014 International Forum is jointly convened by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Australia and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists and the Alliance for Surgery and Anaesthesia Presence (ASAP).

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

Monday 5 May

- The global burden of surgical disease Professor Stephen Bickler, San Diego
- The Emergency and Essential Conditions we must treat to improve global surgical outcomes
- The Lancet Commission for Global Surgery: metrics for global surgery Prof Russell Gruen, Prof David Watters and Dr Rowan Gillies
- Peri-operative Mortality Rates: Making a global impact. How will they help?
- Rowan Nicks Keynote Lecture: Datuk Harjit Singh (Malaysia)
- Surgical and anaesthetic education programs: Improving health outcomes and making an impact; case studies from the region. What can the College contribute?
- Keynote Lecture

Tuesday 6 May

- Presentations by RACS Rowan Nicks Scholars
- Hypothetical: Achieving the Common Good in the Aid Maze. Conflicting priorities: Government vs Organisations vs Individuals, Brain Drain, Role of trainees, Whose standards? Who really benefits from research? Is my best good enough?
- Keynote Lecture: Dr Kelly McQueen, President, ASAP
- Measuring the effectiveness of surgical and anaesthetic interventions: dollars, DALYS and dilemmas
- Keynote Lecture
- Improving health outcomes by targeting specific conditions requiring tertiary expertise: Club foot, Cleft palate, Cataracts, Middle ear infection

Participants at the International Forum must register for the Annual Scientific Congress: <http://www.racsanzca2014.com>

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Associate Professor John Harvey with Timorese doctor Dr Joao Ximenes

Associate Professor Harvey said the majority of burns cases seen in Timor-Leste involved accidents related to cooking including children falling into fires or boiling liquids, women whose skirts have caught alight or through the effects of exploding kerosene stoves.

He said he believed the burns management course had been a great success and that team members were keen to maintain contact with their counterparts in Dili, to provide future support and, where possible, help with resources.

He praised the work of the College undertaken since Timor-Leste gained Independence.

"I think the input of the College has been critical in helping to provide structure around which the East Timorese people can build their own health care system," Associate Professor Harvey said.

"The fact that much of the work done by the College has been based around mentoring is one of the keys to its success in that such relationships help us to remain sensitive to the local culture and aware of both resource limitations and skills required.

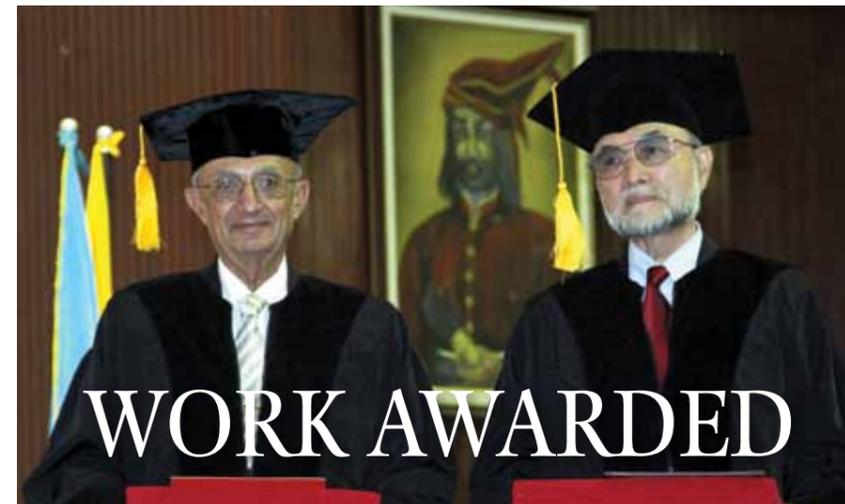
"It means that we get to hear directly what the medical professionals of Timor-Leste need so that we can then work to meet that need, if possible, which is exactly the thinking behind this burns course.

"People still die of preventable burns in Timor-Leste and one of the aspects of this training visit that I particularly enjoyed was working with the young doctors who I hope will go out and spread the message of burns prevention out across the country."

Ms Siobhan Connolly is currently the Chair of the ANZBA Nursing course and was one of two nurses who wrote the new Burns Management course.

She said that spreading the delivery of the material over four days had allowed participants to learn new techniques, engage in discussions and practice new skills.

"In Timor-Leste, even simple things can be an issue for the nursing staff – like the cotton balls that have to be made and sterilised at the end of each day – and experiencing this helps to keep our own working lives in perspective."



Orthopaedic surgeons Professor Bill Cumming and Professor Joe Ghabrial have received the highest award that can be bestowed for services to the nation in recognition of their efforts to help establish an orthopaedic training program across Indonesia

WITH KAREN MURPHY

The Sultan Hassanuddin Awards were presented to Professor Ghabrial at a lavish ceremony at the Makassar University in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in September last year while Professor Cumming will receive his award this year.

In 2010 and 2011, both surgeons were also awarded Honorary Fellowships of the Indonesian Orthopaedic Association, receiving pure gold medals which are traditionally only presented to past Presidents.

Professor Cumming, a recipient of the College's International Medal in 2005 for his lifetime commitment to the Orthopaedic Outreach Program run through the Australian Orthopaedic Association, has been working in Indonesia as a surgical educator, examiner and co-ordinator since the 1970s.

Professor Ghabrial has been providing his skills to the Trainees of Indonesia as a surgical educator and examiner since 2004.

An Emeritus Associate Professor at the University of New South Wales and now retired from operating, Professor Cumming began working in Indonesia

at a time when the country had no orthopaedic surgeons.

Now there are hundreds of such specialists with programs now underway to provide sub-specialist training.

For the past 10 years, both Professor Cumming and Professor Ghabrial have been working to help establish a Bali Training Program following a request for assistance by the Indonesian Orthopaedic Association.

"When we began this program, Bali only had two orthopaedic surgeons and now it has 17, two Professors of Orthopaedic Surgery, two PhDs and 40 Trainees.

"With the combined efforts and commitment of health authorities and local orthopaedic surgeons and the Indonesian Orthopaedic Association, an entire new orthopaedic floor has been built at the Sanglah Hospital in Bali," Professor Cumming said.

"All work done within the new orthopaedic facility now comes under the supervision of Professor Siki and Professor Astawa, the Dean of the University of Udayana in Bali.

"It has proved so successful, in fact, that there are now four training centres in Eastern Indonesia in Bali, Surabaya, Malang, and Makassar which is a great credit to the Indonesian Orthopaedic

Association and our orthopaedic colleagues across Indonesia."

Professor Cumming, who visits Indonesia around four times each year, said he was deeply honoured to have received the Sultan Hassanuddin Award.

"When I first began working in Indonesia, I would often be working in hospitals that had no bandages, no fluids, not even proper beds with mattresses and linens, so it is a great delight to say that medical care there now is almost unrecognisable," he said.

"Over the years many Indonesian surgeons have stayed at my home and great friendships have been formed too.

"Yet having such a commitment to assist can be somewhat selfish, so I particularly wish to thank my wife Marion who has been integral to all my work both in Australia and overseas."

Professor Ghabrial works across the Hunter and New England region of NSW, is a specialist in spinal surgery at the Royal Newcastle Centre and John Hunter Hospitals and was the 2007 recipient of the Australian Orthopaedic Association's Medal for his decades of service to the specialty.

Now the convenor of the Orthopaedic Outreach program in Indonesia, Professor Ghabrial said in a presentation given last year that Bali had now become one of the six national centres for the Board of Orthopaedics exams.

As a further demonstration of their commitment to Indonesia, last year Professor Ghabrial and Professor Cumming also became the convenors of the first pre-exam course offered to Trainees in Bali which is open to all senior Trainees in Indonesia.

They plan to hold the courses twice a year and are in the process of developing Fellowships to allow Trainees to expand their skills in Australia.

Professor Ghabrial said: "We are very proud to have received this award which clearly represents a significant recognition from the Indonesian authorities and respect for our program."

Both surgeons said they wished to thank the Indonesian Orthopaedic Association, the National College of Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma, the Universities of Indonesia and the orthopaedic surgeons and Trainees with whom they have worked.