

Papua New Guinea

The care of Paediatric Surgical disease in PNG has taken a big step forward as a result of the most recent visit in 2005. Having started in 1993, the journey to independence for the PNG Paediatric Surgical team is now closer to being achieved by the success of Dr Okti Poki in the Paediatric Surgical Diploma. Okti will join the group in Lae, to complement the service provided by Dr Mclee Mathew from Lae. Between the two surgeons it is expected that they will provide the bulk of the in-country outreach Paediatric Urology and Surgery, while further visits from Australian surgeons will assist with major cases and further education. Research will become an increasingly important part of the program. The Kind Cuts for Kids Foundation has worked closely with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and AusAID to fulfill the dream of an independent Paediatric Surgical Service in PNG from where much of the funding and assistance has come.

The need for clinical care input from Australian surgeons has now decreased dramatically, and the program of assistance, therefore, needs to take on a new focus, highlighted during this visit by a small number of complex technical cases being operated on.

The number of children operated on in PNG has now gone well beyond the individual patients during the individual visits. The Kind Cuts for Kids for Kids Foundation has been specifically involved in finding the funding for some of the additional visits and for visits for nursing staff. The Foundation also has had a big part to play in the provision of donations-in-kind. Five anaesthetists, three surgeons and five nurses have been part of the program, with well over 1500 patients treated during the visits with in excess of 700 operations

For the provision of services to reach a high standard, there is still a long way to go. Patients are still referred late and the community of both doctors and the public are not sufficiently aware of the care available for children with conditions that can be treated surgically. The infrastructure in hospitals will have to improve, particularly with such basic services such as radiology, although medical staff should remember that the clinical features of the illness should remain the most important features on which treatment is planned.

The Paediatric Surgical Foundation will be a major contributor to the development of Paediatric Surgical services, with the help and drive of Mclee and Okti. Donations-in-kind to the Foundation are now coming from various sources and will assist in enabling the skills acquired by Papua New Guinean surgeons to be applied to a larger number of patients, and more equipment to be made available. Dr Ben Yapo, the intended third PNG Paediatric Surgeon has recently been working in Melbourne, and will be part of an increasingly independent team.