



foot

Scape
Newsletter



From the
President

Welcome to the September 2015 Footscape newsletter. As the majority of Footscape members and supporters would be aware I maintain a strong passion for working with disadvantaged communities abroad. Accordingly throughout my career I've undertaken volunteer based placements in India, Samoa, Kiribati and Nauru. The opportunity to interact with local staff and patients has proven to be an incredible enhancement to my career and life in which I've gained perspective as to the influences of local cultural beliefs and practices upon the development of foot pathology. For example I've come to appreciate the difficulties of achieving diabetes control in the Pacific Islands. In Samoa it is culturally inappropriate to refuse food that is offered whilst commonly consumed foods are high in fat and are of poor quality. In Kiribati the soil was not conducive for growing fruit and vegetables. As such produce needed to be imported and this translated to high prices for families on a small income. Opportunities for exercise are restricted on account of limited footpaths, unrelenting heat and the cultural belief walking is a sign of poverty. Concurrently public transport options are abundant, affordable and readily utilised.



From the President
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Membership
Application

Sign Up as a member today! Please
find our membership application
form attached on page 5.

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From the President

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Attendance to podiatry services were affected in the Pacific Islands for it is culturally inappropriate to point one's feet in the direction of another individual. As demonstrated through recent politically incidents pointing a shoe at someone or hitting them expresses a deep insult and means to direct impurity in their direction. In meeting areas where chairs would often not be present persons would accordingly sit cross-legged on the floor. Resultant pressure had the potential to induce wound development upon lateral malleoli in the high risk foot. Sadly as diabetic foot complications frequently presented late, clinical management often demanded aggressive intervention. Equally upon achieving wound resolution patients would rarely present for further preventative care.

Podiatry principles and practices are seldom implemented in the Pacific Islands. In Nauru there had been an absence of podiatry instrumentation in the country's Hospital. Nursing staff in the Wound Dressing Clinic would subsequently use scalpel blades, without an attached handle, to debride hyperkeratosis, and necrotic tissue from wound sites. Upon witnessing this shortcoming Footscape funded several sets of

podiatry instruments for staff to provide effective clinical care. Indeed Footscape continues to promote Podiatry in the island nation through our working relationship with Equatorial Opportunities. Since 2010 Podiatrists Rebecca Mannix, Kirsten Whisson, Brianna High and myself have all accompanied Sue Barker of Equatorial Opportunities upon short expeditions to the country. During her recent trip Brianna noted health care in Nauru is extremely different to that in Australia. Nonetheless she describes the focus of health care is essentially the same, despite limitations in service capability. Brianna shall be returning to 'Pleasant Island' alongside Sue for a second time in the coming months. A focus for the 2015 trip will entail offloading the diabetic foot.

As foreign health networks don't fully comprehend the importance of the Podiatry speciality volunteering overseas can surprisingly be a difficult task to organise. Consequently few requests are made to Australian aid agencies seeking such volunteers. Nevertheless there are opportunities for enthusiastic Podiatrists and other health professionals to devise a volunteer placement. In doing so important logistics must be considered before investigating a role. Questions to reflect upon include:

- Where do I want to volunteer?
- What languages are spoken in the desired destination?
- How will I handle living and working in a different cultural environment?
- How long should I volunteer for?
- How will I deal with the prospect of isolation?
- What accommodation is available?



Anthony amongst the Kiribati locals in a typical public transport van

- How will my personal commitments in Australia be affected by my absence?
- What vaccinations and other medical needs should I consider?

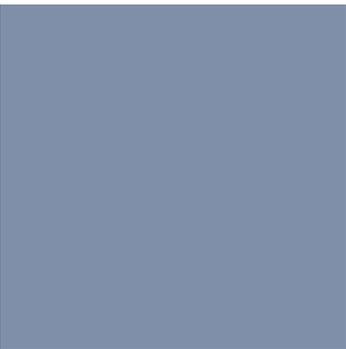
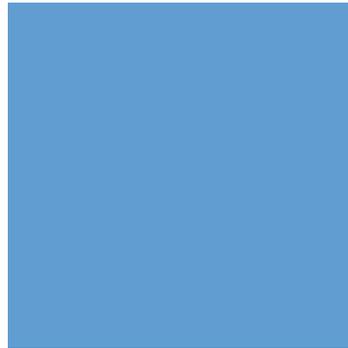
I'd encourage any interested persons to consult accredited Australian aid organisations that send volunteers abroad and ascertain feedback regarding prospects. Such organisations include *Australian Volunteers International*, which is an independent not-for-profit organisation that focuses upon

reducing poverty, providing health and education services, promoting human rights and gender equality, and protecting the environment. For your information I travelled to Samoa in conjunction with the organisation. In this newsletter I welcome a contributing article from Australia Volunteers International detailing the story of a Physiotherapist volunteering in the clubfoot treatment program of Malawi.

Anthony Lewis
President



An open mind and flexibility is needed when volunteering abroad. In Kiribati I initially slept in this 'hut' for about two weeks during the process of acquiring suitable accommodation.



Responding to Malawi's health needs

In January 2013, Ben began an AusAID funded international volunteer placement at the Beit CURE International Hospital in Malawi, and eight months on he says volunteering is one of the most rewarding things he has ever done.

“The hospital is primarily a children’s orthopaedic hospital and the only one of its kind in Malawi. We provide children from all over Malawi and parts of Mozambique and Zimbabwe

with free orthopaedic surgery and physiotherapy follow up. We also administer the National Clubfoot Treatment Program and run training for clinicians from local clinics across the country,” Ben said.

Ben’s role has two main functions; to improve the practical and clinical skills of his colleagues and to instil a more efficient administration and management structure so the physiotherapy department can

+
Ben hard at
work in
Malawi



provide more effective treatments. Although he has only been in the role a short time, Ben and his colleagues have worked hard to provide a more professional unit and a higher standard of care for more patients.

“My days can be very busy. Normally I would begin with a ward round with the medical and nursing team first thing in the morning, followed by an outpatient clubfoot or cerebral palsy clinic where we might see up to 30 children. In the afternoon I typically see the paediatric and adult inpatients. Some days I will also do small teaching sessions with my colleagues or lecture for one or two hours at the University as well. Other days I may be involved in an outreach clinic with one of the district hospitals in a smaller regional centre, where we treat patients and follow them up after surgery.”

CURE International visits district hospitals all over Malawi every six months to provide health care to rural and urban communities across the country. The vast majority of these patients are from poor rural villages and face a multitude of issues affecting their access to quality medical care. Ben credits his colleagues’ ingenuity and creative problem solving skills in being able deliver such effective health outcomes in such resource poor settings.

When he is not working, Ben says

Malawi is an outdoor adventurer’s dream. “I recently brought a mountain bike so I’ve been having a great time with that. The Mulanje Massif Mountain Range is only a two hour drive away and Lake Malawi and many of the game parks are close by. So there is no shortage of places to go and things to do on the weekends. On a personal level Malawians are very open and friendly people. I’ve become quite involved in the local community, developing The Cricket Academy where I play and coach, and encourage young Malawians to take up the game,” he said.

Australian Volunteers International is currently recruiting skilled professionals in all areas of health and vocational education, to work in Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa for Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID), an Australian Government, AusAID initiative. Positions include: nursing and midwifery practitioners and educators, pharmacists, doctors, dentists, audiologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, mental health professionals, lab technicians, health promoters and biomedical engineers.

Through the AVID program, all volunteers receive financial support, including airfares, visas, accommodation, a living allowance, insurance, pre-departure training, and in-country and post-assignment support.



ABN: 26687474315

Membership Application/Renewal Form 2015-2016

Footscape Inc. encourages all supporters and volunteers to be members of the organisation. Membership is free of charge. Applications will be processed at the following General Committee meeting. To conserve resources it is intended membership correspondence will be undertaken via email. Please advise Footscape if you wish to receive correspondence through an alternate medium.

Please complete the following details and submit to Footscape Inc. via email: secretary@footscape.com.au or mail: Secretary, Footscape Inc., 12 Dunvegan Crescent, Macleod, Victoria, 3085.

Member Information

First name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

State _____ Country (if not Australia) _____

Phone (include area code) _____ Email _____

In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association for the time being in force.

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

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