



Interplast®

INSIDE INTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

EDITION 2 2017

PNG PATIENTS REGAIN THE USE OF THEIR HANDS

In March a small Interplast team visited our partner, the Modilon General Hospital, in Madang, PNG, working alongside Dr John Maihua, PNG's only trained plastic surgeon. This is an edited version of an article from the Hospital newsletter published after the visit.

"The Australian Interplast Team have left behind 14 grateful people who received surgical operations and can once again enjoy almost-normal use of their hands.

Rebecca sustained her injury in 2015 when criminals slashed her left hand with a bushknife, leaving her hands powerless and rigid after the wound had healed.

With a grateful smile, she lifted her left hand and flexed her fingers, something she had never been able to do since the incident.

Sitting next to her was Rose. Her life changed for the worse in March 2016 when she fell from the steps of her house and broke a bone in her hand. Despite treatment, since then she has lived in perpetual pain until her operation in March. For the first time after a long time, Rose was able to sleep peacefully until daybreak.

Both women continued to express their thankfulness to God for sending the Interplast Team. They said they can't wait to return home, cook and clean to take care of their homes and families.

Lee was slashed with a bushknife in 2016 and lost the use of his left hand. He smiled thankfully as the team worked on his tailor-made hand splint. He had a tendon transfer to his injured hand and



Dusin has his hand checked by volunteer surgeon Dr Peter Moloney before surgery.

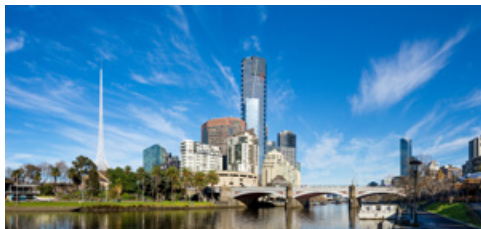
now he can move his hand too.

Another grateful patient was Dusin, who lost the use of his right arm in 2013 after he was bitten by a pig. Today he is on the road to recovery and is looking forward to going back to work in his garden, fixing his house and looking after his family as he used to do.

This is only the beginning. Constant and continuous physiotherapy will enable the restoration and functionality of their hands."



Discharged from hospital, Rebecca (left) and Rose (right).



REGISTER FOR THE EUREKA CLIMB NOW!

In November the Eureka Climb is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Start planning your climb now and help make this important event go off with a bang by raising money for Interplast and our charity partner Whitelion. To find out more and register, go to: www.eurekaclimb.com.au



Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Jonathan Burge at work in the operating theatre, assisted by first-year registrar Sanjeet Raman, and watched closely by first-year registrar Rishaal Sharma.

FIJIAN DOCTORS GRATEFUL FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

The Interplast commitment to passing on surgical skills and medical knowledge to locals means that patients in developing countries benefit from our visits all year round.

In March this year an Interplast surgical team visited Labasa in Fiji. While volunteer plastic surgeons Dr David Ying and Dr Jonathan Burge were performing life-changing operations they were also mentoring first-year registrars who were assisting with the surgeries.

Registrar Sanjeet Raman said assisting the surgeons was an important opportunity to develop his skills and knowledge.

“This is the first time I’ve been able to assist with an overseas team,” said Sanjeet. I’m learning new techniques, and it’s been wonderful to be attached with them.

“I’ve so far assisted for three operations,” said Sanjeet. “The most interesting one was a child with a neck lump removal. It was quite amazing to see those fragile neck structures that we are really concerned to operate on. It was the first neck operation that I’ve ever assisted in. One of the things I learned from the surgeon was that I need to keep calm and work my way through.”



First-year registrar Sanjeet Raman.

Sanjeet said that without the visit from the Interplast team, he would not have many other opportunities to learn from experienced surgeons, as they don’t get many teams from overseas coming to visit. Likewise, he said the outcomes for patients would not be as good without the level of experience and skill brought by the Interplast team.

Dr Jonathan Burge, on his first program for Interplast, said mentoring local staff was one of the highlights of the job. “The staff want to learn, so there’s an ultimate outcome where you teach them what you’ve learnt and hope they go away and do it themselves,” said Dr Burge.

Dr Maloni Bulanauca, Head of Surgery at Labasa Hospital, said that Interplast’s investment in his skills has been important for what he can offer to his patients and his staff. This has come through the regular visits from the Interplast team, along with opportunities for more specialised learning overseas.

In 2016, Dr Bulanauca attended a plastic surgery skills workshop in Samoa run by Interplast.

“It included people with general surgical skills and I was very fortunate to be involved,” said Dr Bulanauca. “It has absolutely increased my ability to help people in regards to flap reconstruction here in Labasa.

“They’ve mentored me in terms of surgical skills and decision making, especially in cases that pertain to plastics and reconstructive surgery. They’ve also mentored me in terms of what it takes to be a sound surgeon. That has been a huge highlight of what Interplast brings to us.

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS IN TONGA

In February our volunteer surgical team visiting Tonga was accompanied by volunteer professional photographer Woodrow Wilson, who took some stunning images of the country and our work. Here are just a few examples.

During the program, the team assessed 92 people and performed 36 life-changing operations that people otherwise would not have been able to receive.

The team also included a hand therapist, who worked with patients before and after surgery, and also helped work with patients who did not require surgery. Treatment from allied health professionals can help reduce the need for surgery, which creates space in the operating list for others who really need surgical attention.

All photos: Woodrow Wilson



Interplast volunteer nurse Jason Tan, from Sydney, adjusts an operating theatre light.



Interplast volunteer plastic surgeon Dr David Morgan, from Melbourne, assesses a patient.



Local medical staff who were working alongside the visiting Interplast team.

VISITORS FROM MYANMAR

In late April we welcomed two guests from Myanmar to Melbourne for training placements.

Plastic surgeon Dr Thurien Tun is in Melbourne for a three-month observation placement at the Dandenong Hospital under the supervision of Associate Professor Michael Leung, Interplast Country Co-ordinator for Myanmar. Dr Thurien will also spend some time at St Vincent’s and The Alfred Hospital.

Khin Mar, a plastic surgery theatre nurse, was in Melbourne for five weeks to observe and learn from theatre staff within the plastics unit at Dandenong hospital. She also spent a day at The Alfred Hospital.



Dr Thurien and Khin Mar's placements were funded by the Baker Foundation.

Dr Thurien has been learning from visiting Interplast teams in Myanmar for a number of years, and this placement gives him an opportunity to further expand his skills.

He completed his initial plastic surgery training through the Myanmar military, and is now undertaking the Doctorate degree in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at our partner, Yangon General Hospital.

“I’m the first person from the military trying to get the doctorate degree for plastic surgery, so when I go back to the military I can train my juniors, and so we can help the patients more than before,” he said.

Khin Mar has been working as a theatre nurse for four years after her three years of training. She has been benefiting from mentoring by visiting Interplast teams for a number of years, and says she has learned many new techniques and skills as a result.

Khin Mar said that while in Melbourne she very much appreciated the methodical approach to teaching procedures for preparing surgical instruments, and pre and post-surgical care for patients.

“When I go back to Myanmar, I will teach everyone there,” she said.

A SMILE FROM SENG

Earlier this year our volunteer surgical team visiting Laos was able to check the progress of young Seng.

Back in 2014 when Seng was just 18 months old, he pulled a rice-cooker of boiling water down on his head. His injuries included deep burns to his face and right hand, and the risk of going blind.

A local surgeon who had trained alongside Interplast teams over a number of years initially treated Seng's burns. Not long after, a visiting Interplast surgical team was able to work with the local surgeon to further treat the burns.

Our ambassador Turia Pitt accompanied this team.

"Little Seng was one of the patients who I met that stuck with me," says Turia. "If not for Interplast, Seng would have been blind."



It really hit home to me how lucky I was to get the treatment I did."

Without the timely treatment from that particular local surgeon and from our team, Seng faced the possibility of a lifetime of disability from lasting blindness and facial disfigurement.

Seng is now nearly five, and as you can see he is full of life and character, and our surgeons say he is developing well. They will check on his progress again next year.

We love hearing how Seng is going, and seeing that infectious smile that brightens up our days! Thanks for being part of helping people like Seng all across the Asia Pacific.

INTERPLAST TEAMS HEAD BACK TO NEPAL



We're thrilled to have taken microsurgery and allied health mentoring teams back to Nepal in early May after a long absence due to visa issues. Our proud Ambassador Turia Pitt and Interplast President Keith Mutimer joined the teams over several days, and were delighted to see the impact of the work in Nepal first hand.

Here you can see Turia with surgeons Dr Damien Grinsell and Dr Anand Ramakrishnan, both from Melbourne.

"In Laos in 2014, I witnessed the life-changing impact of an Interplast surgical program. What really struck me on this trip to Nepal is the profound impact of the training and mentoring. To see so many surgeons, anaesthetists and allied health therapists from both Nepal and Bangladesh learning so much from the Interplast team was just incredible," said Turia.

As we go to print with this edition of Inside Interplast, our team of trekkers are just returning from Everest Base Camp in Nepal. We look forward to sharing some of the amazing stories and images from the trip in the next issue of Inside Interplast – in the meantime follow our social media accounts for updates.

You can continue to support the trekkers with a donation at: <http://turiaseveresttrek.gofundraise.com.au/>



THANK-YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Breast Cancer Education Appeal at the end of 2016.

In early June Breast Care Educator Leah Lynch-Rurehe joined an Interplast nurse education program to Solomon Islands. Her work included teaching women in the community about self-examination and awareness.

With your support we can continue to send programs such as these to people who really need it!

Photo: Volunteer Breast Care Educator Rebecca Weda on a previous Solomon Islands program.



ANDREW'S LIFE WAS IN THE BALANCE...

It's not too late to donate to our tax appeal.

When our Interplast volunteer surgical team met baby Andrew in Tonga earlier this year, his life was in the balance.

A severe cleft lip and palate meant that the seven-month-old could not feed properly. "The milk goes in and comes straight back out," said Anaesthetist Dr Lian Pfitzner.

Andrew was malnourished, and his immune system was terribly weak. He was dehydrated and had suffered repeated bouts of gastroenteritis, with multiple trips to intensive care fighting life-threatening infections.

Without immediate attention, Andrew may not have survived.

But his poor health meant he had also contracted conjunctivitis.

Andrew was sent home for the weekend with a round of antibiotics. It was an anxious wait to see if he would be well enough for surgery.

Thankfully, after the weekend Andrew returned well enough for a successful operation to repair his cleft lip.

Dr Pfitzner said the change was remarkable. Before the surgery, Andrew was a hungry, grizzly baby; afterwards he was content, sleepy and starting to feed better.

The impact on his mum was profound too. Before surgery she looked exhausted and anxious. Afterwards she was a different person - smiling, weeping tears of joy and looking more relaxed and well.

But this was only the start of Andrew's journey back to full health. Our surgeons tell us that the lip and palate usually can't be repaired at the same time - and particularly for a small, unwell baby such as Andrew. He needs time to grow and gain enough health and weight to cope with the next operation.

Our surgeons need to return to Tonga when Andrew is well enough to repair his palate, and then again when he is older and fully healthy to separate the fused digits on his hands.

Together we can ensure that Andrew and other children and adults receive the life-changing surgery that they need.

**PLEASE MAKE A
DONATION TODAY.**

DONATE NOW

Donate securely online at www.interplast.org.au

Fill out the donation form on the other side of this page and post it in the reply-paid envelope. Call us on +61 3 9249 1231





Interplast™

Repairing bodies & rebuilding lives
in the Asia Pacific region

ABN: 59 006 155 193

**YES, I WANT TO HELP
PEOPLE LIKE ANDREW
GET THE SURGERY THEY NEED!**

Return this slip in the reply-paid envelope to
Interplast Australia & New Zealand,
250-290 Spring St, East Melbourne VIC 3002
or make a secure online donation at www.interplast.org.au

MY DETAILS:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

CHOOSE THE AMOUNT YOU WISH TO DONATE

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500

☐ or my choice of \$ _____

Rotary Club

☐ Please credit Rotary Club (if applicable): : _____

CREDIT CARD DETAILS

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Name on card: _____

Card Number: _____

Card Expiry Date: _____ / _____ Signature _____

☐ I am interested in learning more about opportunities to support Interplast in my will. Please send me information regarding bequests.

Donations over \$2 are tax-deductible.

An annual receipt will be issued at the conclusion of the financial year.

Any information you provide to Interplast will be treated in the strictest confidence. Interplast will only use your personal details to provide you with the opportunity to contribute to a range of services and facilities that will benefit Interplast programs. Interplast does not rent, lease, or sell your personal details to any other organisation. Interplast Australia & New Zealand respects your privacy. For more information on our privacy policy please see our website at www.interplast.org.au. Please call us on 03 9249 1231 if you would like to be removed from our mailing list.