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INSIDE INTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

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TRAINING IMPROVES CARE FOR NEPALI BURNS PATIENTS

New skills for local physiotherapists will improve patient recovery and help reduce scarring.

At Kirtipur Hospital in Kathmandu, the small team of physiotherapists is increasingly being asked to help treat burns patients, so the Hospital Director, Professor Dr Shankar Man Rai, asked Interplast to provide some training.

In Australia, an important part of treating a burns patient is providing custom-fitted compression garments, normally prepared by a physiotherapist. They fit very tightly like a second skin and apply a firm and even pressure to the scars and the underlying tissue. When measured and fitted correctly, they help prevent thickening and hardening of the scars, as well as reducing their lumpy appearance.

Wearing compression garments is an experience our Ambassador, Turia Pitt, knows all too well. But up until now, burns patients treated at Kirtipur Hospital have not had access to custom-made



Interplast volunteer physiotherapist Jenny Ball with Interplast Ambassador Turia Pitt and local woman Bindu Maharjan, who has been employed to help sew compression garments for burns patients.

compression garments. The cheaper, mass-produced and ill-fitting compression garments sent from India mean that burns scars thicken and harden, often restricting movement and affecting recovery.

In May a team of Interplast physiotherapists travelled to Kathmandu to run training workshops, and Turia was there to see the process first-hand.

"I'm thrilled that Interplast is making this possible"

– Turia Pitt

Nepali physiotherapists were joined by colleagues from Bangladesh to learn how to fit burns patients for custom-made compression garments. Over several sessions, they learned how to measure a burns patient and then sew the compression garments themselves on a sewing machine donated by Interplast.

Mohan Krishna Dangol from the Kirtipur Hospital's Physiotherapy Department said the three days of training was very important for those who attended.

"Learning about sewing the garments here was our initial try," said Mohan. "We are really grateful to the Interplast team for helping us do better for the treatment of burns patients."

A local woman, Bindu Maharjan, has been employed by the hospital to work alongside the local physiotherapists to help make the compression garments. Turia met Bindu during the training.

"As someone who knows first-hand the importance of custom compression garments in a burns rehabilitation program, I'm thrilled that Interplast is making this possible," Turia said. "Such a simple training program, a sewing machine and employing Bindu will have wide-reaching and life-changing effects for burns patients starting right now."

Hobart physiotherapist and long-term Interplast volunteer Jenny Ball led the training. "The local physios were all so keen to pick up new skills and knowledge," Jenny said. "I was delighted to receive an update from them recently. They have made more garments and are surprised at how simple and useful this new skill is, commenting that the training was better than they could have imagined."



Interplast volunteer physiotherapist Jenny Ball shows teams from Nepal and Bangladesh how to sew a compression garment.

TREKKING TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD

For Sandra Heiner, joining a fundraising trek to Everest Base Camp for Interplast was a life-changing experience.

"It's pretty amazing looking at it. I just wanted to stay in that moment for a while."

That's how Sandra Heiner describes the feeling of making it to Everest Base Camp and gazing upon the tallest mountain on earth in May this year.

Sandra joined 24 other adventurous souls on an Inspired Adventures trek through Nepal to Base Camp to raise money for Interplast.

For Sandra, who lives in Queensland, it was her first experience of such an adventure, and it was inspired in part by her infant son, Mac.

When she first heard about the Nepal trek, Sandra had been back at work with Johnson & Johnson Medical for a mere eight weeks after 12 months maternity leave.

"You could see where the money went"

- Sandra Heiner

wasn't able to smile. They did some nerve repair on him that enabled him to smile, which was pretty amazing."

Inspired by what they had seen, the trekkers then hit the trail to Everest Base Camp. Sandra said the experience was more than she could have hoped for, and that to be so close to the world's tallest mountain was astounding.

"It does capture you in the moment where you're thinking that it's pretty remarkable that I'm getting to look at this. And the fact that we got there on our own feet rather than just taking a helicopter!

"It's a feeling of accomplishment - I'm really here!"

Sandra says she has forged some deep friendships with some of the other trekkers, and would very much recommend the experience of taking on a fundraising trek for Interplast.

"Yes, absolutely. I think it's fantastic," she said. "When you're going in such a big group, each day you could talk to someone different, you never got sick of each other, it was just a really good time. I'm really happy I went for it."

Our Everest Trekkers raised more than \$245,000 for Interplast. The money raised from our amazing trekkers over the past few years is vital for helping us to continue to change futures across the Asia Pacific. You can get involved – join our 2018 Fiji trek. Book your spot now. See the panel on page 2.



Finau with her new friend, Interplast volunteer nurse Sally-Anne Mitchell, moments before going into the operating theatre for surgery.

OPERATION CHANGES FINAU'S FUTURE

Little Finau from Fiji has had a rough start to life.

She was born with a cleft palate. It meant she had difficulties eating, and she was unlikely to develop proper speech if the palate went unrepaired.

But Finau's mother also has multiple health issues that means she is unable to care for Finau, and her father is not involved in her life.

Vilimaina and her husband have taken on the responsibility of caring for Finau (Vilimaina and Finau's mother are cousins). They already have two adult children of their own.

"My husband is very busy, so I'm the one who looks after her," Vilimaina said. "Finau is going to be with me forever."

But the couple don't have much money, and they could not afford to pay for an operation for Finau. When Vilimaina heard earlier this year that our surgical team was coming to Labasa, the major township on the northern island of Vanua Levu, she brought Finau in.

The morning after her operation, 21-month-old Finau was recovering well and eating already. Vilimaina said that before the surgery, eating was difficult for Finau, with food going into the cleft in her palate, up through her nose, or out through her mouth. But within hours of the operation, this had changed.

"Now I'm watching her eating and can

see it getting better, see her swallowing it straight down," she said.

Vilimaina said the operation would have a huge impact for Finau.

"She will be able to talk, and also be able to focus on her education. Because the other way, I'm not sure she could have done anything," she said.

"I am very happy because I can't afford this, so it is like a gift for me," said Vilimaina. "I really appreciate the help."

You can help us to keep changing futures for people such as Finau. Sign up for our 2018 Fiji fundraising trek today! Book your spot now. See the panel on page 2.



Finau and her carer, Vilimaina, the morning after Finau's surgery to repair her cleft palate. Both were tired, but relieved and doing well.



On the way: Sandra builds a cairn of stones with the Himalayas in the background. >>

Below right: Made it: Sandra triumphant at Everest Base Camp.

TREK FIJI FOR INTERPLAST IN 2018

Fiji is rich in lush scenery with a vibrant traditional culture, and you will experience what makes this Pacific island nation unique on this exciting nine-day adventure. From its picturesque villages to its spectacular mountain views, this adventure takes you beyond the beaches, into the heart of Fiji.

Beginning in Suva, you'll learn more about our work on a project visit, as well as how your funds make it possible for us to repair bodies and rebuild lives across Fiji.

As we venture inland you'll discover a captivating landscape of pristine rainforest, glittering rivers and dramatic peaks that tower over the green rolling hills. You will sleep in traditional villages, enjoying meals and sharing stories with the locals.



"I've led treks along the Great Wall of China, the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu and the Kokoda Track in PNG for Interplast, and they've all been epic. I can't come on this Fiji trek as I'll be embarking on a new adventure as a mum, but you don't need me to have a great time. Please take up the challenge and help make a difference for people across the Asia Pacific through Interplast."

- Turia Pitt, Interplast Ambassador

Book your spot on the Interplast Fiji Trek now at:
<https://inspiredadventures.com.au/events/interplast-fijian-trek-2018/>

THE FUTURE OF PLASTIC SURGERY IN SRI LANKA IS IN GOOD HANDS

We regularly review our programs to ensure they are meeting our partners' needs and achieving the most effective outcomes. A recent review of our work in Sri Lanka gave a very positive assessment of our impact on the country's growing plastic surgery program.

When Chithra, 23, cut off her thumb while opening a coconut, she didn't have to wait for an Interplast team to arrive in Sri Lanka to reattach it.

Instead, local plastic surgery trainees performed the complex five-hour operation under the supervision of their mentors at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka.

Trainee Thilakshi Subsinghe said Chithra will soon undergo hand therapy and is expected to regain full function of her thumb. This will allow Chithra to return to caring for her four-year-old daughter and her job as a tea plucker, which requires the use of both thumbs.

It's a great example of how Interplast's investment in training Sri Lanka's plastic surgeons and trainees is benefiting the people of Sri Lanka.

There are only 14 plastic and reconstructive surgeons servicing a population of more than 20 million, so these trainees will have plenty of work ahead of them.

But if Chithra's accident had occurred 15



The Sri Lankan plastic surgery trainees who reattached Chithra's severed thumb (with one observing).

years ago, the outcome might have been very different. When Interplast first started work in Sri Lanka in 2001, there were just two plastic surgeons servicing the entire country - one of whom retired the day our team arrived. Now, along with the 14 fully qualified plastic surgeons, there are more trainees coming up through the ranks.

Since that first visit, requests from our local partners have led to ongoing expansion of our program. Now we make three trips a year to provide mentoring in head and neck surgery, hand microsurgery and craniofacial surgery; a craniofacial surgeon from Nepal also participates in the craniofacial program.

In 2009, we also introduced allied health mentoring visits. Allied health specialists such as physiotherapists and hand therapists can work with patients before and after surgery to ensure the best possible outcomes.

With the support of the visiting Interplast surgeons, about half of all plastic surgeons in Sri Lanka have undertaken

their mandatory foreign training placement in Australia, with trainees currently in both Melbourne and Perth, and a third due to begin their placement in Adelaide soon.

Staff from the National Hospital of Sri Lanka have made it very clear that they don't want Interplast to come and do the operations - they want Interplast to train them so they can do it themselves.

In the words of one local plastic surgeon, Kavinda Rajapakse: "We have taken a leap forward because of Interplast. We couldn't imagine where we would be without Interplast."

Over the years to come, many more people such as Chithra will benefit from the growing team of skilled Sri Lankan plastic surgeons - a legacy that all Interplast supporters can be proud of.

Our surgical and allied health training programs in Sri Lanka are currently funded by the Australian Government's aid budget through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australian NGO Cooperation Program.



HELP US CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF THE EUREKA CLIMB

Interplast has been a part of the Eureka Climb since its inception in 2008, and this year we're excited to be celebrating 10 years of climbs to the best views in Melbourne from the Eureka Skydeck. Register now, or support a friend as they raise money for Interplast and Whitelion.

Find out more at:
www.eurekaclimb.com.au



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Interplast Australia & New Zealand is actively supported by Rotarians in Clubs and Districts throughout Australia and New Zealand



The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons established Interplast with Rotarians and the Fellows remain active supporters.



Interplast is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. For more information, go to acfid.asn.au.



BYAMBAJARGAL'S HAND

Byambajargal, now 28, is from the remote Mongolian town of Murun. When she was a child, she burned both hands in an accident. As the burns healed, the skin tightened, pulling her fingers down and making them difficult to use.

Last year Interplast volunteer plastic surgeon Dr Kirstie MacGill operated on Byambajargal's right hand. During this year's program, she came back for Dr MacGill to check how it is healing.

When our volunteers return next year, Dr MacGill hopes to operate on the other hand.

Without this surgery Byambajargal wouldn't have been able to use her hands effectively. Now she has the hope of finishing her studies and finding work as a beautician.

You can change futures for people like Byambajargal and help our volunteer teams provide life-changing surgery for people across the Asia Pacific. Make a donation now.



*Main Image: Dr Kirstie MacGill and Byambajargal
Above: Byambajargal's hand*

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CHANGE FUTURES FOR
PEOPLE LIKE BYAMBAJARGAL**

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