

PTC in Samoa

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The first Primary Trauma Care courses to be held in Samoa took place on the 4-8 April 2005. In recent years, PTC has been taught in many parts of the Pacific, including Fiji, Tonga, the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands and Palau, so this was another important step in the development of PTC in the region.

Samoa is a small island nation in the South Pacific, about half-way between New Zealand and Hawaii. It has a population of about 200,000, a relatively large population compared with many other Pacific countries.

The courses were held at the Tupua Tamasese Meaole II Hospital in the capital, Apia. Dr Tia Va'ai, an anaesthetist at TTM II, did a great job as the local organiser, assisted by Dr Tala Tava'ao, an orthopaedic surgeon, and Dr Stanley Dean, an anaesthetist and assistant CEO. Three overseas instructors were involved – Dr Douglas Pikacha, a surgeon from the Solomon Islands, Dr Salamasina Aiono, a Samoan anaesthetist currently working in Auckland, and myself. The courses were largely funded by AusAID through the Pacific Island Project and also generously supported by the Samoan Ministry of Health.

We ran two 2-day PTC courses and a one-day Instructor Course. 23 people, mainly doctors and nurses from TTM II Hospital attended the first course. We then trained nine local instructors who organised and taught the second 2-day course. The second course was very busy, with 35 participants, including fire officers and district nurses. In Samoa, the Fire Service is equipped with basic first aid equipment and plays a very important role in initial trauma management.

There were many highlights. The instructors and participants were very enthusiastic and always looking for ways to apply PTC principles to local needs. Parts of course was taught in Samoan and we were able to develop a number of scenarios involving participants from a variety of backgrounds. The lunches were big enough to last a full 24 hours!

It was very pleasing to see that many doctors now working in Samoa (including the newly trained instructors) had previously done the course during their final year of training at the Fiji School of Medicine. Courses are run twice-yearly in Fiji, thanks largely to the enthusiasm and hard work of Dr Sereima Bale and others. These courses are a vital part of spreading the PTC message around the Pacific.

I hope that these courses will be the first of many in Samoa. There is now a strong group of local instructors who are planning to run another PTC course in Apia within one year. Plans are also under way to translate some of the teaching materials into Samoan.

Many thanks to Dr Tia Va'ai and the rest of the team for their hospitality and hard work.