



# RD9455 CHANGING FUTURES IN FIJI WITH INTERPLAST

Thanks to the generous funding from Rotary District 9455, Interplast has been able to deliver a successful one week surgical and training program in Labasa, Fiji, in March 2016. This program has enabled our volunteer surgical team to change futures through surgery, therapy and training for local medical personnel. If further funding can be secured, Interplast and our local partners hope to continue this valuable program on an annual basis.

## BACKGROUND TO INTERPLAST'S FIJI PROGRAM

Interplast's first surgical program in Fiji was delivered in 1983 and in 2010 Interplast delivered its 100th program activity to Fiji. During the past 30 years, Interplast has delivered approximately three programs each year, visiting the centres of Suva, Lautoka and Labasa and Taveuni, at the request of the local hospitals, the Fiji Government and through the regional Strengthening Surgical and Clinical Services in the Pacific (SSCSiP) program. Over 5000 surgical procedures have been performed and demand for Interplast's services continues to exceed the resources of Interplast teams. Training programs directed at surgical registrars, nursing and allied health personnel are a key feature of Interplast's activities in Fiji.



Interplast volunteers providing in-theatre teaching to local counterparts in Labasa

## LIFE-CHANGING SURGERY

**72 PATIENT CONSULTATIONS  
AND 34 SURGICAL  
PROCEDURES PROVIDED IN ONE  
WEEK**



**Interplast**™

Repairing bodies & rebuilding lives  
in the Asia Pacific region





## ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

This program activity to Labasa was Interplast's 122nd visit to Fiji and was coordinated in collaboration with doctors at the Labasa General Hospital. Funding for this activity was provided by Rotary District 9455. From 12-19 March, a team of volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgeons, anesthetists, nurses delivered a busy and successful plastic and reconstructive surgical and training program at the Labasa General Hospital in Labasa. Through this one week program, 34 life-changing surgical procedures were completed, and local Fijian surgeons, anesthetic registrars and nurses received crucial clinical training.

## THE INTERPLAST TEAM

The team included two plastic and reconstructive surgeons from Melbourne, Dr David Ying and Dr Anand Ramakrishnan, anaesthetists Dr Ian Hogarth and Dr Philippa Hall (VIC) and nurses Sally Mitchell and Simone Nast-Clarke (NSW). The core of this team have been involved in the Interplast Labasa program for several years, meaning that each visit is an opportunity to further build on already strong personal and professional relationships with the local partners. Collectively this team has volunteered their time on 30 Interplast programs to 7 different countries. The team was also joined by observer Morgan Haines, a medical student who was sponsored by the Avant Medical Student scholarship.

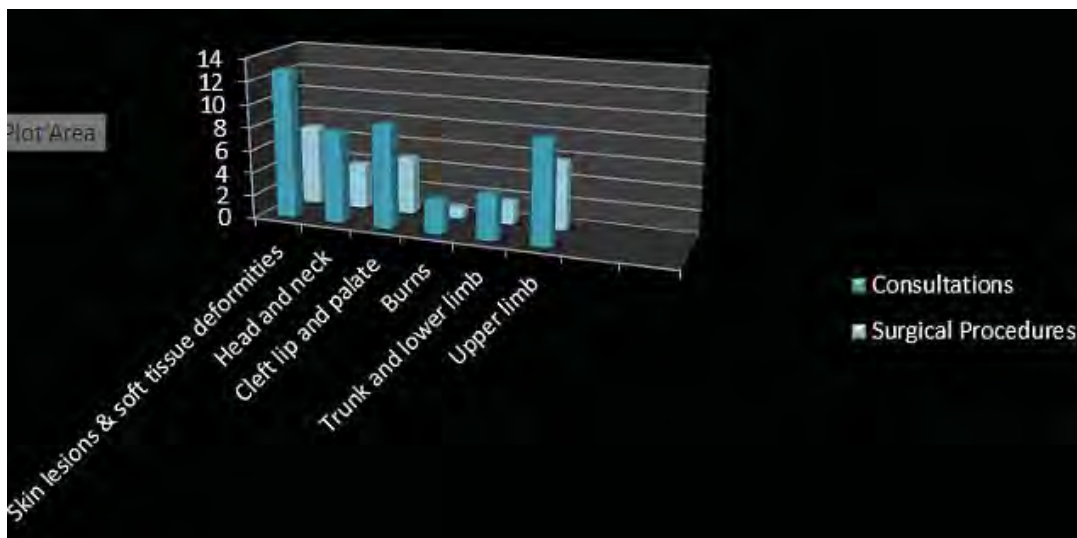
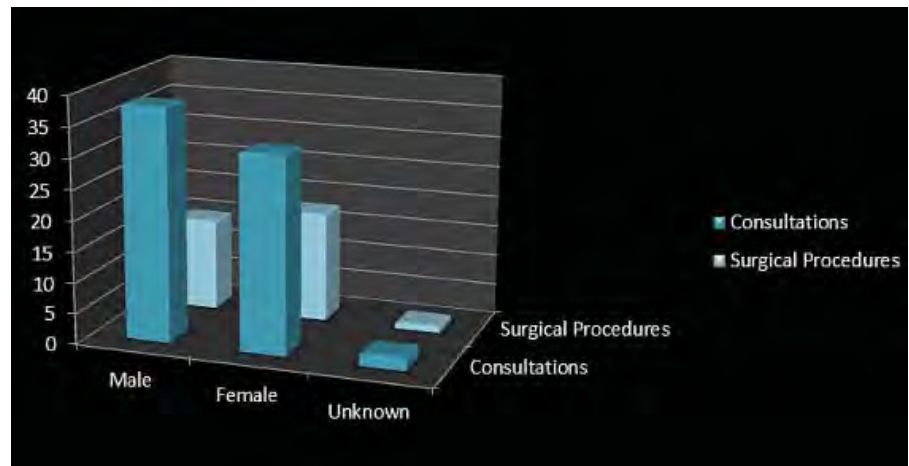
Below: Interplast nurse Simone, with some of the Fijian medical professionals



Above: Interplast nurses Simone and Sally, and anaesthetists Ian and Philippa, winding down at the end of a busy day in Labasa.

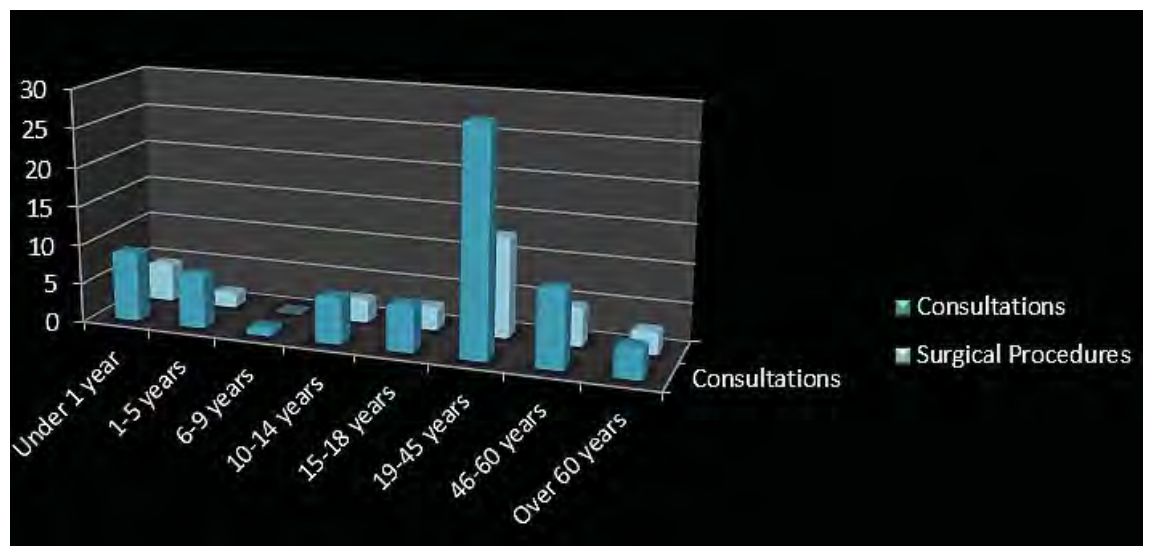
## PATIENT DATA FROM THIS PROGRAM

Gender of patients



Types of procedures

Age of patients





## CASE STUDY:

### RENEWED HOPE FOR A YOUNG FAMILY

For the young parents of little Grace, welcoming their daughter into the world brought an unexpected surprise – a cleft lip and palate. Despite all of the challenges this poses for a child in Fiji, they were overjoyed with their new daughter. However, they live several hours from Labasa, so seeking appropriate treatment was a challenge, and travelling to see visiting doctors was a financial strain on the family, as it meant significant time away from work. However, when they heard of the impending visit of the Interplast team this year, they packed up their daughter and travelled to Labasa. Fortunately, Grace is a healthy, well fed baby, thanks to her mum's ability to navigate the challenges of feeding a baby with a cleft lip and palate. She was also a good age to receive surgery, as she is still young enough that it won't have impacted with her speech, or her social interactions. Grace was reviewed by the Interplast team during the initial patient clinic, and was scheduled for surgery.



Baby Grace before her operation

Grace's parents were understandably worried that if she never got surgery, she may have faced difficulties fitting in with other children, and even touched on the subject of dating and marriage and how they worried maybe her daughter might be socially hindered.

Morgan Haines, an Avant sponsored medical student who observed the program recalled the excitement felt as she sat together with Grace's parents outside the operating theatre.



Baby Grace, following her cleft repair, with her mum  
Interplast anaesthetist Philippa.

"I still can't even fathom what a wait it would have been for them!" Morgan said. "They were completely trusting of the visiting team and felt very positive about the surgery. When I was sitting with them Grace's mum kept asking if it was fixed, how it looked? Every time staff walked in or out of the theatre she almost stood out of her chair to try and sneak a peak!"

A lip repair was performed by Interplast's Dr Ramakrishnan, and Grace's parents were overjoyed with the result. They will return next year to see the team, to repair Grace's cleft palate.



Grace's relieved parents cuddle their  
little girl following her surgery.

## TRAINING DELIVERED

In addition to the life-changing surgery provided, the Interplast team delivered crucial training to local surgical, anaesthetic and nursing personnel. Head of Surgery Dr Maloni ensured that his surgical registrars had maximum exposure to the Interplast team during their visit, and Drs Ying and Ramakrishnan were able to deliver a formal tutorial on assessment of hand injuries to all hospital medical staff (from Consultants through to interns and students). One-on-one mentoring took place continuously in theatre, with the surgeons, but also with the anaesthetic technicians and nurses. Interplast nurse Simone was also able to deliver 2 education sessions to both registered nurses and nursing students from the Labasa Nursing College on the post-operative care of cleft patients, perioperative nursing, and the importance of venous access during the intraoperative period.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a continuing need for services in this region and an annual visit remains suitable.
- What the local surgeons lack in skill relates mainly to the more specialized procedures that Interplast volunteer surgeons perform regularly and that they do not (i.e hand surgery, tendon repairs and nerve repairs plus cleft lip and palate surgery).
- It would be difficult to imagine improvement being possible in these more specialized areas without regular and ongoing in theatre supervision for long periods, or at least an intensive skills workshop lasting for a number of days.
- The team continues to recommend that the current composition (2 surgeons, 2 anaesthetists and 2 nurses) as appropriate for this program, and the one week duration is optimal. Due to lack of local anaesthetic consultants, it is recommended to have two Interplast anaesthetists with the team. At least one surgeon on the trip must be cleft-trained.



## THANK YOU ROTARY!

The Rotary Club of Labasa has been providing logistical support to visiting Interplast teams since 1983. On this visit, the Club arranged airport pickups for the team, and hosted a welcome lunch on arrival. Unfortunately as theatre ran late, the team was not able to join the Club members for the planned mid-week meeting and dinner. Interplast very much appreciates the ongoing support of Rotary in Fiji.

Thank you to Rotary District 9455 who funded this activity, as without your generous support, this program would not have been able to happen. Interplast looks forward to continuing our longstanding relationship with Rotary Clubs in Australia & New Zealand in promoting our work and implementing our life changing and life saving programs.

\*If you would like to utilise the photographs in this report, please seek advice from Interplast first, as these images have limited consent for publication.