

PNG Oral Health Initiatives Moving Forward

Interest in undertaking local research and finding local solutions to oral health problems in PNG is increasing.

University of PNG Dental School

There have been major changes over the last year at the Division of Dentistry of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG). There has been a major upgrade in the dentistry division with the installation of ten new dental chairs and the introduction of cone beam CT, digital radiography, electronic patient records and a digital prosthetic laboratory. The laboratory will offer oral maxillofacial post-surgical prostheses as well as metal cast dentures and crowns and bridgework. A new dental school building has been funded and is being designed and is expected to open in the next few years. A MDS in oral medicine will be offered from 2024 onwards with a postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dentistry as a pre-requisite.



School Dental Service

After a slowdown due to the COVID pandemic, the School Dental Service is again visiting schools and treating children around the country.

Oral Cancer

Oral cancer workshops had to be delayed due to violence associated with the PNG election. Oral cancer upskilling workshops to improve secondary prevention of oral cancer by screening before the onset of signs and symptoms will now commence in 2024. We are hoping that Fellow Michael McCullough from the University of Melbourne and Dr Elizabeth Sari from La Trobe University will again be available to oversee the workshops.

PNG has localized cancer data but lacks a centralized cancer registry. Improving the PNG Cancer Registry is moving ahead. The registry will start with oral cancer and use Queensland Government software which has been provided free of charge to PNG.



An editorial was recently submitted by the Dean of the SMHS, the CEO of the Port Moresby General Hospital and Fellows Mahmood Siddiqi and Len Crocombe to the PNG Medical Journal titled "Oral Cancer in PNG, Where to from here?" In the editorial there is a proposal for an Oral Cancer Policy for PNG, edited by PNG health experts with input from provincial clinicians on the local issues influencing oral cancer and from international researchers of oral cancer. The policy will explore preventive measures

for oral cancer with an emphasis on primary and secondary measures and creating referral pathways for patients with oral cancer who live outside the main cities in PNG.

The John McIntyre Foundation is now registered and has a constitution and by-laws. The only action required before the Foundation can take donations to improve oral health in PNG is to set up a bank account.

Can you help?

There are some areas where the Division of Dentistry could do with overseas assistance. The dental staff need professional development. Support from Australian Dental Schools, either face-to-face or via Zoom, would be very helpful for professional development in PNG. Visiting faculty staff is also needed. Support is particularly needed in Dental and Maxillofacial Radiology.

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