



Burnet launches new research program



Burnet's Professor Brendan Crabb AC, with Patron of HMHB Dame Carol Kidu DBE and Professor Peter Siba.

After two years in the making, Burnet Institute's flagship research program, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies (HMHB) was officially launched at a gala event in Kokopo, East New Britain.

Staff, partners and supporters were among the packed audience which included Australian and Papua New Guinean dignitaries: Papua New Guinea Minister for Health, Education, Research, Science and Technology and Member for Gazelle, the Hon Malakai Tabar MP; Papua New Guinea Secretary for Health Mr Pascoe Kase; East New Britain Deputy Provincial Administrator, Mr Edward Lamur; Director Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, Professor Peter Siba; Counsellor, Health and HIV, Australian High Commission, Ms Christine Sturrock and Patron Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, Dame Carol Kidu DBE.

Burnet Institute Director and CEO, Professor Brendan Crabb AC said the

launch of HMHB in Kokopo was a very special day for Burnet because it signified the importance of the landmark program in addressing major health issues through research.

"The outcome of the research will be solid evidence that sheds light on the major barriers to better health for mothers and babies in the Province and throughout PNG. This evidence is for health authorities to use to make better-informed decisions, to provide more effective and efficient healthcare," he said.

"It is my view that in health policy in PNG, there really will be a before, and after, HMHB."

Papua New Guinea Minister for Health, Education, Research, Science and Technology and Member for Gazelle, The Hon Malakai Tabar MP officially launched the five-year, AUD \$10million HMHB program.

Story continues on page 3....

Contents

- 2 Director's Message
News in Brief
- 3 Burnet launches HMHB
- 4 Staff Profile
Picture Caption Stories
- 5 Picture Caption Stories
- 6 Training News

Director's Message



Professor Peter Siba

This quarter has been very busy for the Institute. A lot of our staff have been working really hard on their papers to present during the upcoming Medical Symposium in Port Moresby. I have full trust in them that they will perform to the best of their individual abilities and make the Institute proud and PNG as a whole.

We have had important visitors to the Institute. Apart from our valued and existing collaborators and partners, we've also had the opportunity to meet and collaborate with army medical personnel from the PNGDF, Australian Air Force and the US Air Force just to name a few. I believe this partnership is great for the Institute as it will help the targeted group of staff to various exercises especially in disaster relief scenarios.

The Baton Relay that has been moving around the country as part of the 2015 PNG Games also graced the PNGIMR headquarters with their presence as they passed through Goroka. One of our staff was privileged enough to take part in it.

Apart from these events, we are looking forward to many new and exciting events coming up.

In the meantime, PNGIMR continues to carry out valuable research to improve the health of all Papua New Guineans.

For more information about PNGIMR, please visit our website- www.pngimr.org.pg or send an email to info@pngimr.org.pg

News in Brief

Medical Symposium 2015

The 2015 Medical Symposium will be held this year in Port Moresby and it will be hosted by the Women Doctors Association. The website for the Medical Society is www.mspng.org.pg.

Please find below, the link for the Medical Symposium Program <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0ibeSrYginYSnVOUXRGUzN1YVE/view?pli=1>

The theme for this year's Symposium is "Advancing Women's Health through Innovation" Concept: Innovative and strategic approaches to strengthening Health Systems with a focus on Women's Health. The Symposium is set for Sunday 31st August to Wednesday 2nd September 2015 at the Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby.

Specialist Meetings will be held after the main Symposia from Thursday 3rd to Friday September 2015. Venues have yet to be allocated. Due date for all abstracts is on the 1st June, 2015.

Death Notice

Joyce Obed passed away on the 30th of April, 2015. Joyce was a scientific officer attached with the Malaria Control Project under the Population Health and Demography Unit. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.



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Mr Tabar paid tribute to Burnet's innovative HMHB research initiative, a first for East New Britain, a first for Papua New Guinea.

"Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies will translate significant benefits for maternal and child health and for communities across our nation. This is a landmark program for PNG and the outcome of the research will identify the cost of effective health interventions and help us identify country-wide strategies," he said.

"More than 5,000 babies don't make it to their first month of life and 1,500 mothers die each year. This government is committed to addressing and solving this."

Papua New Guinea Secretary for Health Mr Pascoe Kase said the priority for the PNG government was a national research agenda.

"Maternal and child health is a key priority for the government. A lot of our children still die and this requires an approach that needs research. We need to find new and better ways to save lives," Mr Kase said.

"We cannot do this on our own. We commend Burnet's HMHB program as best practice with local and international expertise for best outcomes. HMHB is an opportunity for new interventions and practices, improved facilities and improving staff capacity."

East New Britain Deputy Provincial Administrator, Mr Edward Lamur said with a population of more than 300,000 people and the very high rates of maternal and child deaths, a program like HMHB was needed. "Back in 2007, we started a partnership with Burnet through sexual and reproductive health. With HMHB we are confident we can make progress going forward. Capacity building is something we look forward to working on with Burnet and outcomes of their research," Mr Lamur said.

Director Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, Professor Peter Siba said HMHB was an important program with Burnet's expertise in clinical, social and laboratory research.

"We are happy to partner Burnet to reduce child and maternal deaths. Partnerships are the way forward to enable the IMR and government through nation building to improve health," he said.

Representing the Australian High Commissioner to PNG, Ms Christine Sturrock said the Australian Government was committed to working across all indicators to ensure health system strengthening in the country.

"The high burden and complications leading to the loss of women and children is unacceptable to all of us. We want all women to have the opportunities that are taken for granted in Australia," Ms Sturrock said.

"Burnet has a productive partnership approach that will find the real reasons for the poor maternal outcomes. Often simple interventions can make a difference."

Professor Crabb also said HMHB was special because it was a partnership. He acknowledged the many partners in Papua New Guinea who have assisted in the program to start its research studies this year.

These include: the Papua New Guinea Government, East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea Department of Health, Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, the Australian High Commission in Papua New Guinea, local participating clinical services – St Mary's Hospital, Nonga General Hospital, Napapar Health Centre, Paparatava Health Centre, Keravat Rural Hospital – local Burnet staff and researchers, Australian patrons and donors, and Burnet researchers and program staff.

Together they have made HMHB possible.

To read more, follow this link: https://www.burnet.edu.au/news/535/historic_launch_of_hmhb_program_in_kokopo

GO TEAM PNG!



Danny Saho (Far right) and fellow participants of the Baton relay proudly holding up the baton in Goroka.

The PNG Games are finally here and our very own Danny Saho was privileged to take part in the baton relay.

The aim of the Baton Relay is to give an opportunity to the people in remote places as well as the people living in major towns/cities to be part of the South Pacific Games in July 2015.

The route he was allocated to run in was at the Eastern Highlands Provincial Hospital all the way down to the front gates of PNGIMR head quarters, Goroka.

The torch as we all know signifies people coming together for the same course or purpose and for this instance, The SOUTH PACIFIC GAMES. It has travelled half way around PNG and it will continue to travel until it reaches its final destination which is Port Moresby and then the games will begin.

It is a rare opportunity because carrying of a torch is usually done by the athletes and sports people but PNGIMR along other organisations in Eastern Highlands are fortunate to take part in this once in a life time event.

We wish all participants and the country as a whole to perform to their very best in the South Pacific Games in July.

Staff Profile



Name: Fiona Akarapa
Position: Fixed Assets Officer

Fiona Akarapa is our new Fixed Assets Officer based in our Goroka Office. Fiona hails from Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province and her job is to update the fixed assets registry for all IMR assets across all the branches. Fiona says that her job is indeed a very big challenge but she believes that in order for changes to take place, one must be a team player. She is cooperating with her colleagues in the finance and audits section to bring about that change.

Picture

HWHPNG donates to new Family Centre



There is now a newly established family counselling centre in Goroka near the Eastern Highlands Provincial Hospital. This center will help problematic families who need help and counselling. It was opened by the Australian Representatives from the Healthy Women Healthy PNG also witnessed the opening with boxes of health kits to donate to the new center.

The Healthy Women Healthy PNG (HWHPNG) is made up of female staff at all the IMR branches. HWHPNG is an advocacy, not-for-profit group that aims to provide awareness on health issues affecting women in Papua New Guinea and also to raise funds for the Well Women's Clinic.

Support or follow the HWHPNG on their Facebook page for their latest events and news.

Celebrating Womens Health Day



Womens Health is a very serious issue in Papua New Guinea and it is everyone's business. Staff from IMR were invited by the Mercy Works staff during their celebrations of Womens Health Day. Womens Health Day is commemorated World wide on the 28th of May every year. IMR staff namely Primrose Homiehombo and Josephine Gabuzzi from the maternal section of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit were there to advocate for women's health. The highlight of the day were women prisoners from Biute jail who performed items and showcased many of their hand made goods which were on sale during the day. They are often the most neglected and overlooked group of women when it comes to service distribution but most times Mercy Works steps in to help these women rise above it all. Mercy Works is one of our community partners in Goroka town.

Photo : Some of the graduates during the first graduation for Mercy Works partners.

Caption Stories

The Defence Force team visits the IMR



Army medical personnel from several countries visited the IMR headquarters in June including the US Air Force.

They held a meeting among IMR researchers, key scientists and clinicians to learn about IMR research and also provide information on their experiences with disasters around the globe including the Ebola outbreak in Africa. It was a great opportunity for them and the IMR to build a network amongst colleagues from different countries who will be involved in various exercises especially in disaster relief scenarios.

Pictured are key senior staff of the IMR, some staff from the Eastern Highlands Provincial Hospital and Defence Force personnel from several countries including the US and Australian Air Force.

Bilums in the Swiss



Pictured on the left are Professor Michael Alpers and wife Deborah Lehmann with their bilums in IMR colours in Switzerland.

This picture was taken by a passerby who then posted it on social media as he said it was very rare to see people carrying bilums in that part of the world.

Professor Alpers and Deborah were long time staff who worked with IMR since its humble beginnings and are still collaborating with the IMR in certain research work.

Collecting Samples



Right: Pictured here is Sinafa Robby from the Environment and Emerging Diseases Unit, dissecting a rat. Samples of the rat's intestines are then taken to be studied in the laboratory. These samples will help greatly in finding out the types of diseases that is passed on from rats to humans or vice-versa.

Collecting rat samples from the field is a tedious task as rats are tricky little creatures. Rat traps are distributed to study villages and communities a week before a team of scientists recover them and collect captured rats.

Left: Mosquitos captured in the field and taken back to the laboratory for studies in IMR Madang.



Training Nius

Training News Update

For the first time this year, IMR has enrolled Post Graduate students to do their training at the University of Goroka.

Ben Toto, Tobias Maure and Sylvia Soso are three of our staff who are currently engaged in part time studies doing Course work and research and they are due to complete their studies in 2016.

This is part of the MoU signed in 2011 between UOG and PNGIMR which captures the collaborative needs of the two institutions.

Some of our students have returned from studies and are now back at the IMR sharing their knowledge and most importantly utilising the skills they have acquired during their studies overseas.

Officers on Scholarships are being monitored closely by our Training office while other trainings for staff have already been approved.

Research Workshop

The Research and Technology Secretariat's current goal is to gather all research institutes and universities to develop their research agendas.

This statement was highlighted recently at a workshop for the Research Science and Technology Secretariat which was held on the 5th – 7th May, 2015 in Port Moresby.

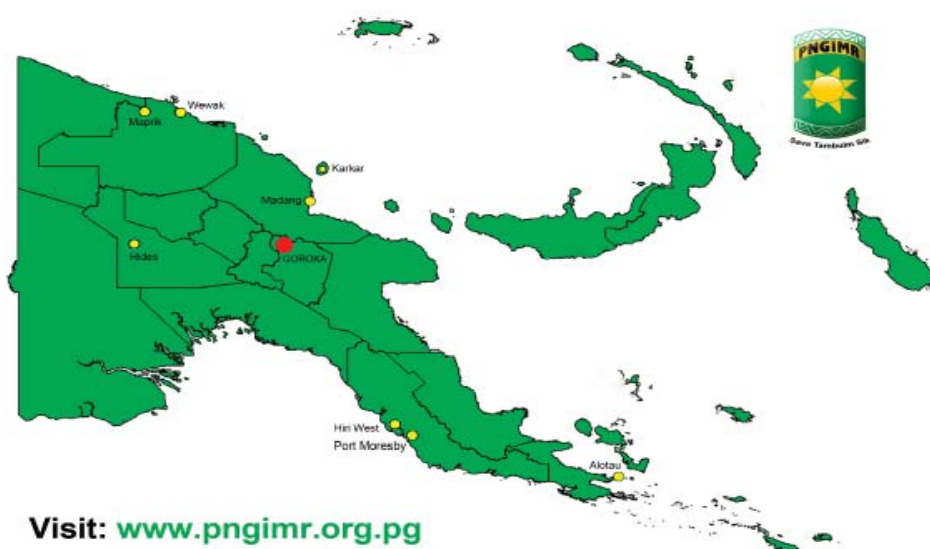
The workshop included IMR senior heads, namely Prof Peter Siba, Dr William Pomat, Dr Angela Kelly, Dr Leanne Robinson and Dr Inoni Betuela.

The grueling three day workshop, hosted by The PNG Science and Technology Secretariat, involved discussions regarding challenges and issues in health, agriculture, energy, and environment, just to name a few.

The first day saw participants being introduced to each other and also to the purpose of the meeting. The theme of the workshop was 'Strategic direction for a smart, wise, fair and happy society through research, science, technology, and innovation'.

Training Nius is compiled by Dickson Kuvi (Training Officer) and John Yogiyo (Assistant Training Officer). Phone: +675-531 4259.

OUR LOCATIONS



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