



## PNGIMR attends EHP launch to fight against polio

*"EHPHA with the support of our stakeholders are aiming at vaccinating more than 100,000 children below the age of five with the polio vaccine within the next 12 months."*

*Dr Joseph Apa, CEO for EHPHA*

THE Eastern Highlands Provincial Government along with key health stakeholders in PNG officially launched the campaign to fight the country's current polio outbreak on Monday 16th of July, 2018.

The CEO for Eastern Highlands Provincial Health Authority (EHPHA) Dr Joseph Apa said EHPHA with the support of their stakeholders were aiming at vaccinating more than 100,000 children.

"More than 100,000 children below the age of five will be vaccinated with the polio vaccine within the next 12 months," he said.

Dr Apa emphasized to the public to understand that polio has no cure and the only way to address the matter is to vaccinate children who are most vulnerable.

WHO representative Zaixing Zhang stated that polio is a highly infectious disease and spreads rapidly with population movements.

"Polio causes permanent paralysis and the only way to fight against polio is to be vaccinated," said Mr Zhang.

Meanwhile, PNGIMR paediatric nurse Mr Gerard Saleu said the Institute formally was the official reference laboratory for the Western Pacific region regarding outbreak diseases such as polio, but said this collaboration seized in 2003.

Eastern Highlands Provincial Administration Mr Samson Akunaii said "I am asking the World Health Organization to re-establish this collaboration with PNGIMR as the reference laboratory for the outbreak," he said.



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# Acting Director's Message

**Hello and welcome to the 55th issue of the IMR Nius.**

**T**his newsletter brings you stories of recent activities at PNGIMR.

The year is progressing well, and despite the challenges we are heading in the right direction. As we move forward I would like to encourage everyone to think about three words – communication, motivation and responsibility. Communication is a vital aspect towards supporting motivation amongst our staff to promote ownership and responsibility while carrying out our duties.

2018 has provided some highlights. On behalf of staff and management I congratulate PNGIMR staff who have successfully completed their studies - Agnes Mek (SRHU), Irene John (CASS), Ben Toto (SRHU), Shadrach Jally (VBDU) and Bernadine Kasian (VBDU). We thank our former Director Professor Peter Siba for believing in capacity building. This has opened the way for PNGIMR staff to pursue

further studies in health and medical research within PNG and abroad.

To our PNG National scientists who have completed their studies and for those who are still doing their studies, I encourage you all to strive for the best in your careers, and to be leaders in the field of medical and health research in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In the spirit of team work I would like to encourage the PNGIMR staff to stand together and work towards organizing a successful 50th Anniversary celebration for the Institute in August 2018. Since 1968 this Institute has been a pioneer in the field of health and medical research to improve the health status of Papua New Guineans.

As we work towards celebrating our 50th Anniversary let us look forward and ask ourselves what the PNGIMR can become 50 years from now. That dream starts today in all that we do together as staff of the PNGIMR.

**William Pomat, Acting Director**



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## IBBS report launch

*"This sort of research needs to be done on an ongoing basis particularly on strategic research to generate information that the leaders need to know about to make the right decisions."*

THE Minister for Health and HIV/AIDS Hon. Sir Puka Temu officially launched the Kauntim Mi Tu report in May at Port Moresby.

Sir Puka stressed that this type of researches must be on an ongoing basis particularly on strategic research.

"This sort of research needs to be done on an ongoing basis

particularly on strategic research to generate information that the leaders need to know about to make the right decisions," he said.

Meanwhile, the report revealed that stigma, discrimination and violence pose barriers for key populations, resulting in high transmission rates of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STI).

PNGIMR principal researcher, Dr Angela Kelly-Hanku stated that the study was carried out among the key population in Mount Hagen, Lae and Port Moresby with PNGIMR, Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney and the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition, the report is the first comprehensive bio-behaviour survey done and is an initiative of the government, with financial support from the Australian Government, Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention with funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief.

The study exposed that these key populations did not seek health care, neither did get tested for HIV and STIs, nor did they use condoms due to stigma, discrimination and violence that they faced frequently.



## ANU & PNGIMR training partnership

THE Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research's (PNGIMR) Sexual & Reproductive Health Unit (SRHU) are collaborating with the Australian National University's (ANU) Department of Pacific Affairs to enhance and develop the research capacity of

organizations funded by Pacific Women on issues concerning gender equality and women's empowerment in PNG.

A four-day (17-20 April 2018) workshop was held at the Adolf Saweri Lecture Theatre, at PNGIMR Goroka. The workshop hosted

20 participants from various professional backgrounds in PNG whom have an enthusiasm towards research.

The aim of the workshop was to enhance and develop the research capacity of organizations funded by Pacific Women

on issues concerning gender equality and women's empowerment in PNG.



## BSP & NSL visits PNGIMR staff

It is ideal for all employees to understand the services offered to them by such financial institutions like Nambawan Savings Limited and the Bank of South Pacific.

PNGIMR HR Manager Tobby Apa acknowledged the two institutions for visiting PNGIMR.

“Having NSL and BSP staff visit PNGIMR enabled staff to get first hand information on the products and

services offered by these financial institutions,” he said.

He added that the task is on each person as a formal employee to understand the services provided and invest in securing their finances with the choices available from these two renowned financial institutions.

“On behalf of PNGIMR, we thank staff from NSL and BSP for making time available to come to the Institute to



take us through the services offered and also addressing staff questions and queries,” said Mr Apa.

## PNGIMR sworn its Project Steering Committee (PSC)

THE Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) conducted a swearing-in ceremony for members of its Supply & Tenders Board (STB) on Friday 4th of May, 2018.

The event also coincided with the establishment of the PNGIMR Project Steering Committee.

According to PNGIMR Finance Manager, Edwin Mondo, the appointment and swearing of members of STB are a necessary requirement.

“It is a necessary requirement of the



Public Finance Management Act in order for PNGIMR to access its capital expenditure funding for 2018 from the National Government,” said Mr Mondo.

Meanwhile, PNGIMR Acting Director, Dr William Pomat said these funds will be used to build state of the art laboratory and office infrastructure in Madang.

“This is to enhance the work of Institute’s Vector Borne Disease Unit and to strengthen national capacity in health and epidemiological surveillance in PNG,” he said.

The STB was sworn-in by Senior Magistrate from Goroka District Court, Her Worship Lorna Sani at the Pacific Gardens Hotel conference room, in Goroka, EHP.

## PNGIMR staff donate to SHP earthquake relief

Tragedy hit the New Guinea highlands of PNG when an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.5 occurred on 26 February 2018 at 3.44 am. Southern Highlands Province and Hela Province were the worst affected areas. It resulted in lives lost, people injured, loss of property and damage to infrastructure in these provinces.

Nationwide efforts to provide

immediate assistance began with disaster relief being sent to the care centres there.

PNGIMR also rallied its staff to donate towards providing disaster relief to the people of SHP and Hela Province. Led by Mr Gerard Saleu with assistance from staff volunteers, they organized the Institute’s staff donations.

Mr Gerard Saleu who is a clinical researcher in paediatric respiratory diseases, on behalf of local NGOs was the Eastern Highlands Provincial Coordinator for relief support for the earthquake affected areas.

Mr Saleu said, “It humbles me to see colleagues here at the Institute and friends come together to donate and help our

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# Vector Borne Diseases Unit Update

A team of PNGIMR scientists from the Vector Borne Diseases Unit in Madang and Goroka attended a one-week capacity building workshop from the 30th April to the 11th May at the Holiday Inn, Port Moresby.

The workshop was facilitated by IMR partners from the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases (NIPD), Shanghai, China, and sponsored by the Trilateral Malaria Project.

It was a follow-up workshop for the participants who went for training at NIPD last year for a molecular diagnostics and GIS/spatial mapping training.

Hence, the main aim of the workshop was to build capacity around the practical aspects and application of DNA sequence analysis and GIS as tools to increase the quality of malaria diagnosis and control in PNG.

Furthermore, the trilateral malaria project is a

partnership project between China, PNG and the Australian Government. Its main purpose is to contribute to reducing malaria morbidity and mortality in PNG, through effective cooperation.

*The trilateral malaria project is a partnership project between China, PNG and the Australian government. The main purpose of the project is to contribute to reducing malaria morbidity and mortality in PNG, through effective cooperation.*

Also, since its inception in 2016, the trilateral cooperation model has greatly strengthened the partnership in research between PNG partners, particularly CPHL, NDoH, SMSH, and PNGIMR.

At the same time the project has broadened and strengthened our research collaboration with Chinese partners and our traditional Australian partners.

A total of 24 participants attended the workshop including staff from CPHL, NDoH, SMSH and PNGIMR.

Another workshop on molecular diagnostics has been scheduled for IMR and CPHL staff at NIPD, China, in September this year.



L-R: Desmond Sui, Tamarah Koleala and Shadrach Jally  
(missing: Bernadine Kasian, Diana Timbi, Sharon Jamea)

## Weekly seminar highlights

In its endeavour to inform and encourage staff interaction on research studies undertaken, the Institute has weekly seminar sessions for staff to attend. The seminars provide an avenue where researchers are able to communicate their findings and it often leads to discussion and opinions being generated for consideration. Research and support staff have the opportunity to sit in and hear reports of various studies undertaken by the respective units of the Institute.

Visiting professionals, mainly scientist who come to IMR, are also given the opportunity to present their research work. Graduate Scientific Officers or students attached with the Institute for on-job training, are also scheduled to present as part of their professional development and also to experience a real presentation scenario expected

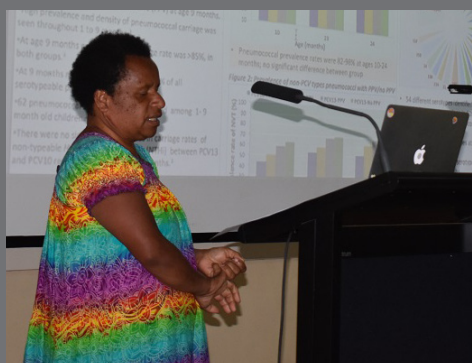
at local and international meetings like conferences and symposiums. Staff returning from short term or long term training are also scheduled to present their experience and plans for the future. Staff from

the Corporate Affairs & Support Service Division are also given the opportunity to present updates or information regarding staff general welfare and employment issues.

At the head office in Goroka, the weekly seminar is usually held on Wednesday afternoons from 3-4 pm at the Adolf Saweri Lecture Theatre. With one to two presenters per session, presentation topics varies from the fields of Infection and

Immunity, Sexual & Reproductive Health, Population and Demography Health, Vector Borne and from the Environment and Emerging Diseases.

*At the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR), developing and upgrading the skills of our national staff to enable them to take on more senior roles is paramount to sustaining the research programs in the long run.*



## Disaster relief efforts supported

*continued from page 4*

fellow country folk in crisis after this tragic natural disaster.” He also officially welcomed staff and guests to witness the handover of the donations.

On behalf of the administration of PNGIMR, Finance manager Edwin Mondo said, “I thank Rotary international, Eastern Highlands Provincial Government and MAF for assisting us to deliver our donations to the people of Hela and Southern Highlands Province”. “We also have worked in these two

provinces and sympathise with the people who have lost much of their lives due to this devastation.”

“I would like to thank the staff of PNGIMR for contributing in your donations to support the disaster relief efforts being done nationwide to help the people of Hela and Southern Highlands”, said Ms Orpha Peter (Rotary International - Goroka) who represented the EH Provincial government in receiving the donations.





# 2018 PNGIMR weekly seminar topics presented to date

- Persistent high prevalence of non-vaccine *Pneumococcal* serotype carriage to age 24 months in Papua New Guinea children vaccinated with 10-valent or 13-valent *Pneumococcal* conjugate vaccines (Tilda Orami Tumae)
- Maternal Immunization study: PCV13 safety and immunogenicity pilot study in women of child bearing age in PNG (Sarah Javati)
- Pneucaptive study: 13-Valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine coverage in hospitalized children with pneumonia from the Eastern Highlands Province, PNG – Poster Presentation (John Kave)
- Papua New Guinea National Malaria Control Program/ TRILATERAL Program: Health Facility Surveillance 2010-2017 (Diana Timbi)
- Water and sanitation status of households in rural PNG: evidence from the PNGIMR integrated Health and Demographic System (iHDSS) (Rebecca Emori)
- "Kauntim Mi Tu". Port Moresby, Central Province. Key findings from the Key Population Integrated Bio-Behavioural Survey, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea - Men who have sex with men and Transgender (TG) (Herick Aeno)
- Educational status of women of reproductive age 15-49 in rural PNG. Evidence from the PNGIMR integrated Health & Demographic Systems (Nanim Ainui)
- Survival of *N. Gonorrhoea* on chocolate Agav Slopes (Ben Toto)
- Key findings from the Population Integrated Bio-Behavioural Survey (IBBS) in Port Moresby – Female Sex Workers (Sophie Ase)
- Information education communication (IEC): the PNGIMR integrated Health and Demographic System (iHDSS) - Poster on Breast Feeding practices among children under 5 years (Noel Berry)
- PNGIMR fixed asset registry - challenges & improvements (Morris Sinevei)
- Papua New Guinea National Malaria Control Program Household Survey Report: From 2016-2017 (Sharon Jamea)
- The Hela/Komo experience: working for the PNGIMR Hides integrated Health and Demographic System (iHDSS) over the past 5 years (Vinson Silas)
- Polio outbreak in PNG (Gerard Saleu)
- Papua New Guinea National Malaria Control Program, Health Facility Survey 2010-2016 (Serah Kurumop)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (Gerard Saleu) – external presentation at the Goroka General Hospital
- Paediatric pneumococcal meningitis, serotype distribution and antibiotic resistance at the Goroka Provincial Hospital (1997- 2015) (Mitton Yoannes) - external presentation at the Goroka General Hospital

## Video Sessions

- Leadership and goals by Late Dr Myles Munro (facilitated by Dr Janet Gare)
- How to speak so that people will want to listen by Julian Treasure (facilitated by Rex Borimana)
- Be humble and other lessons from the philosophy of water by Raymond Tang (facilitated by Rex Borimana)
- A story that will change your life by Lisa Nichols (facilitated by Rex Borimana)
- Why I study the most dangerous animal on earth – mosquito by Fredros Okumu (facilitated by Rex Borimana)



# Training updates

## UoG students on industrial training

A part from the Institute's commitment towards training and developing its internal workforce, the Institute has taken on the role to also contribute towards the country's human development by providing on the job training for students.

Based on an existing understanding we have with our partner institution(s), we have taken on board four final year students from the University of Goroka to undergoing on the job training here at the Institute. The students are: Ms Winnifred Duk, Mr Edwin Tanu, Mrs Hillie Meki and Ms Ruth Kandiu.

Winnifred and Edwin are biological science students and are attached to the Infection and Immunity Unit. Hillie is a vocational teacher by profession and is currently on extended studies at UoG undertaking Bachelor of Technical

and Vocational Education Training (TVET) specializing in Business Studies. Ruth is a fourth year Business Studies student and both students are attached to the Corporate Affairs & Support Services Division.

The students attachment with IMR is part of their final year assessment and will be for a period of six weeks. They will finish off on the 24th of August 2018 and we hope that after the completion of their training, they have experienced an organisational culture and had exposure to a real work situation, have developed job/sector specific and soft skills, developed professional behaviour and confidence, learnt how to work in a team and managed time, networked with professionals for future career opportunities and gained an understanding of the work and role of PNGIMR.



## 2018 graduated PNGIMR staff



### Agnes Mek

Sexual & Reproductive Health Unity  
Masters (Arts)  
Communication for Social Change  
University of Goroka

### Shadrach Jally

Vector Borne Diseases Unit  
Post Graduate Diploma  
Biological Science  
University of Papua New Guinea



### Irene John

CASS  
Bachelor of Arts - Professional Studies  
University of Papua New Guinea

### Ben Toto

Sexual & Reproductive Health Unit  
Honours Biological Science  
University of Goroka



### Bernadine Kasian

Vector Borne Diseases Unit  
Post Graduate Diploma  
Biological Science  
University of Papua New Guinea



## Co-chairs – PNGIMR 50th Anniversary Organizing Committee

The progress of the Organizing Committee has been challenging given the economic situation in the country which has had an effect on our fundraising efforts. However, not to be outdone, the Organizing Committee would like to thank the local cooperate business houses like the ANZ bank who have donated K5,000 towards the 50th celebrations so far. We are also grateful to Hon. Henry Tutuwo Ame (Office of the Member for Goroka), who assisted the Organizing Committee with a cheque of K10,000. Goroka Telikom PNG Limited donated K2,000 as well. Despite the current gloomy economic situation of the country, the local business houses and our local MP came forward to support us and we are grateful for their generosity.

We are looking forward with optimism for more donations as we near the actual celebrations. The anticipated donations are actually payments and commitments from the fundraiser dinner held in Port Moresby.

We are also grateful to our international collaborators who

have assisted through financial donations. WEHI donated AUD\$5,000.

We are beginning to receive responses from the international speakers for our scientific sessions and speakers are starting to pay their registrations, which is very encouraging. Our final draft of the scientific session program is in order.

In addition, we would like to thank the PNGIMR staff for their continuous support in our various fundraising activities. We have less than two months to go before the 50th Anniversary celebration. In the remaining weeks, we will be staging two major fundraising events in Goroka.

As per the verbal briefing by the co-chairs at our meeting in the ASLT, we encourage every staff member to unite with us so we can raise sufficient funds to celebrate our 50 years anniversary.



Telikom Goroka branch manager presenting a cheque to Dr Janet Gare



ANZ branch manager and staff presenting a dummy cheque to the colloquium committee



Hon. Henry T Ame presenting a cheque to the Colloquium co-chair Mr Omena



CEO of Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC) presenting a cheque to the Colloquium co-chairs.



## Occupational Health & Safety at PNGIMR

**T**HE Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) as any company has occupational health & safety at the workplace as part of its safety code policies to ensure staffs are responsible for their safety and the safety of their colleagues.

A workshop on OHSW was held at the Adolf Saweri Lecture Theatre (ASLT) in June with ten participants, three from Madang office – Tamara Koleala, Absalom Mai, Rebecca Vinit – and seven from Goroka office – George Koki, Mathias Ulka, Junie Menao, Lynette Bureng, Morris Sinivei, Valentine Siba, Tilda Orami, Bobby Apa and Irene John (Participants

absent were Barne Willie and John Paul Matlam).

PNGIMR Safety officer George Koki said such OHSW is everyone's responsibility and it is applicable for all employees as well as visitors who visit the institution.

"All have to be inducted on the safety codes at PNGIMR," said Mr Koki.

He said it would be important to also include ergonomics as part of the Institute's safety code policies to also cover employees who have desk-based offices.

He added that for PNGIMR, currently our safety code policies cover mainly OHSW in the laboratories because these spaces deal with biological samples that are highly infectious.

"The Institute provides personal protective equipments (PPE) for staff employed including laboratory coats, gloves, masks and safety glasses, and staff are also reminded to wear closed shoes in the laboratories as well as not to drink or eat," he said.

He stated that a safety committee is proposed to be in place once the terms of reference are submitted and approved by the PNGIMR Director.

## Visitors at PNGIMR



US Army/CDC visit IMR, Dr Carlos Williams & team



Australian DFAT Health Security team



Team from US providing training on data analysis & writing on IBBS project



UOG students visiting PNGIMR Labs



Honourable Minister Wera Mori at PNGIMR



Australian High Commissioner, Mr Bruce Davis chats with Dr Moses Laman



**O**H&S is a cross-disciplinary area concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment. Its goal is to promote a safe work environment.

Secondary concern is to protect co-workers, study participants, nearby communities and the general public who are impacted by the work place environment.

*1. Any employee while at work shall give the care of which the employee is capable for the employee's own health and safety and for the health and safety of any other person who may be affected by the employee's acts or omissions at the work place.*

II. Any employee shall not -

- *Wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuses anything provided in the health, safety or welfare in pursuance of any provisions of this Act or the regulations; or*
- *Wilfully place at risk the health or safety of any person at the work place.*

## The Employer

- The institution WILL provide ALL employees with a safety working environment at ALL times.

## Employees

- All employees must comply with the organization's policy and best practice guidelines at the work place.
- Any employee demonstrating non-compliant behaviour WILL receive the appropriate disciplinary action.

## SOME OF THE LABORATORY OHS GUIDELINES

All human blood, serum and tissues specimens must be treated as potentially infectious.

Suitable protective clothing must be worn at all time when performing lab work.

- Lab coats, gloves, enclosed footwear, etc..
- Protective clothing should be worn when removing vials from liquid nitrogen tanks.

Under no circumstances should mouth suction be used to pipette chemicals or to start a siphon. Use a bulb pipette or a mechanical pipetting device to provide a vacuum.

Keep work area free and clean from obstruction. Clean up spills immediately.

Potential infectious materials must never be taken into offices

Hands must be washed before leaving the laboratory.

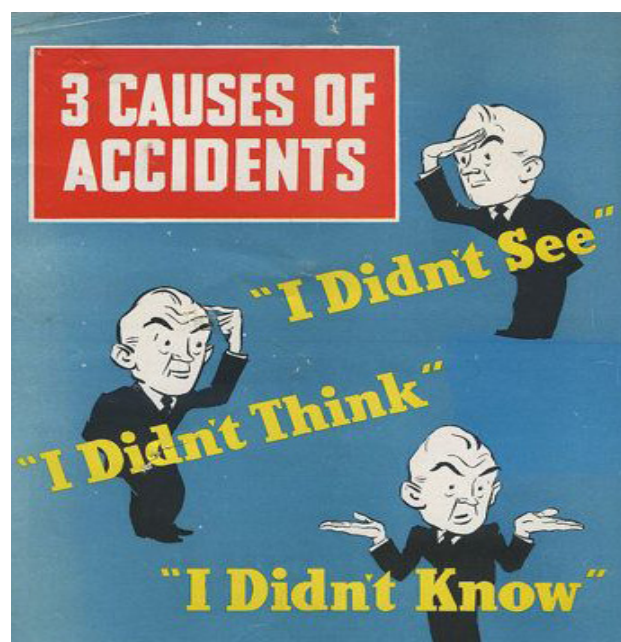
Eating, chewing of betelnut, drinking and smoking is strictly prohibited in all laboratory areas.

No food or drinks should be stored in laboratory cool rooms or refrigerators.

All work place must have a first aid kit.

Do not block excess to exits, emergency equipments or electrical panels. etc.

There is also a field, waste management and transport of specimen guideline.



# From Casper to Attaché

THE Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) payroll office successfully completed their training for the new payroll software called Attaché in June.

PNGIMR HR Manager, Tobby Apa, said prior to this, the payroll office had been using Casper payroll software.

"It had been a challenge to use due to it being unable to have good backup and being not able to capture the right calculations such as taxations," he said.

A local consultant and senior payroll officer with Fresh Produce Development Agency (FPDA) Eina Kataro was engaged over two months

to come in and conduct training with the staff on how to use Attaché.

*"It is good that PNGIMR has come on board to use Attaché software for its payroll and I hope the training given can help the staff to use the software"*

"It is good that PNGIMR has come on board to use Attaché software for its payroll and I hope the training given can help the staff to use the software," said Mrs Kataro.

Meanwhile, Tumo Goso on behalf of the payroll office thanked Mrs Kataro for training their officers to use the new software.

"It is good, but using Attaché is time consuming as we go through each employee's record to update them which has affected the time of when pay is processed for employees," Ms Goso said.

Mr Apa concluded that in order to help maximum utilization of this software to serve its full purpose, the payroll staff will undergo further training facilitated by the software providers.

