



## K20, 000 boost for Medical Symposium



The Eastern Highlands Provincial Government pledged to back the 2014 Medical Symposium after committing a total of K20, 000 towards the medical symposium fundraising drive. The symposium will be co-hosted by the Provincial Health Authority and the PNG Institute of Medical Research. Governor Julie Soso was named the patron of the Symposium. See full story on page 6.

# PNG poultry safe

IMR study shows PNG poultry is safe and free from Avian Influenza virus

By Joanne Wayang

Good news for the poultry industry and its consumers in PNG.

A recently published surveillance study has found that there is no evidence of avian influenza or bird flu circulating in Papua New Guinea poultry populations. The study *Surveillance of avian influenza viruses in Papua New Guinean poultry, June 2011 to April 2012*, was published recently in the journal *Western Pacific Surveillance and Response*.

This study was conducted by the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in collaboration with the National Agriculture and Quarantine Inspection Authority (NAQIA) and Centre of Excellence for Influenza Research and Surveillance at the St Jude's Research Hospital in USA.

"The aim of the study was to investigate whether or not bird flu is circulating in PNG's poultry populations and also assess its risk on the industry and human

health," said Dr Yazid Abdad, head of the Environmental and Emerging Diseases Unit at IMR.

Over 500 poultry samples from chickens and ducks were collected by NAQIA staff in 82 sub-sites in 14 provinces from June 2011-April 2012 as part of their routine surveillance programme. The samples were then sent to IMR laboratories for analysis.

Throat and cloacal swabs were tested to detect if there were any current infections of bird flu circulating in the poultry population while blood samples were used to determine past exposure to the virus.

"All samples tested at the laboratories at IMR and St Jude's Research Hospital found no detection for both current and past infection of bird flu," said Dr Abdad.

This is the first study to investigate the presence and distribution of avian

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# Director's Message

## Another challenging New Year for IMR

Hello and welcome back to another new year!

2014 will be a challenging year for us at the Institute. We are at the turning point where the management is faced with financial challenges which will result in drastic measures being taken during the year.

The operations of a government-run research institution like IMR is dependent upon funding and when limited funding is available, we all need to be proactive in securing funding for our medium to long term projects.

It is now a trying time for us because the national government has not increased its budget allocation from last year, while AusAID has trimmed down its funding. As a result, the management will be focused on cost saving measures whilst looking at other ways to source funding.

This quarter like previous years is a busy time for us as our senior scientific team are currently working on writing scientific proposal for international and domestic grants for research and we are optimistic of successfully obtaining grants.

Two of our major projects - the Global Fund funded Malaria Control (MalCon) Project and Exxon Mobil's Partnership In Health (PIH) Project funded by Exxon Mobil - are winding down this year. Findings from our Malaria Control project (MalCon) have informed the National Department of Health on significant health outcomes such as the reduction of malaria cases as a result of the introduction of the nationwide rollout of treated mosquito nets. The project has also found that health worker training is needed on how to treat and diagnose malaria because not all fever is malaria. It also identified that the rapid diagnostic testing is essential in determining whether a patient is down with malaria or not. The MalCon project has also seen the release of the new malaria drug - Mala 1 - after malaria parasites were seen to have developed resistance against the previous malaria drugs. Other findings have also guided health policy outcomes and assisted the governments fight in curbing malaria deaths in PNG.

With the PIH project, important findings were tabled on how increased wealth affects the health of people in the LNG project impacted areas. It looked at the nutritional transition in the communities and the change in lifestyle as a result of increased cash flow in the areas. It found that lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, obesity and malnutrition, were on the rise, while cancer and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS were also a threat. Emerging infectious viral diseases, and communicable and vector borne diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria were also evaluated. Not only that, the operations of primary health care delivery and performance in rural settings were also assessed through the project. Findings have been published and can be found on our website.

We also farewelled our long serving staff member, Audrey Michael. Audrey was our Chief Medical Technologist at the Bacteriology Laboratory in Goroka until her passing in February. She passed away while undergoing specialist medical treatment for mouth cancer in the Philippines. She served IMR for 29 years and was a valuable asset to the Institute. Her passing is our loss and we will surely miss her. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

With that, I look forward to another year of exciting medical research.

Thank you,  
Professor Peter Siba



Professor Peter Siba

"Finding results from our Malaria Control project (MalCon) has informed the National Department of Health on significant health outcomes such as the reduction of malaria cases with the introduction of the nationwide rollout of treated mosquito nets. "



# Clinicians get emergency care training



Graduates and their trainers after the completion of the four-day training course on Emergency Care.

Our clinical staff working in the Partnership in Health (PiH) project in West Hiri, outside Port Moresby, can now perform emergency response and care whilst working in the field. This followed a four-day training course on emergency care which they attended from 4 to 7 March at the Laloki Nursing In-service Centre, outside Port Moresby.

This training of PiH staff was organized by PiH West Hiri Clinician Dr Patricia Rarau and was conducted by members of the South Pacific Society of Emergency.

Topics covered included General principals in identifying emergency cases, triaging, care of the unconscious, basic life support (CPR), advance cardiac life support, primary trauma care, shock and resuscitation, burns and burns management, transfer of critically ill patients.

Dr Patricia Rarau said the training was a part of ongoing clinical training for her clinical staff.

"Most importantly this training is to ensure that the HEO and nurses maintain their clinical skills when attending to emergencies," she said.

"Having gone through this training, they will be more confident when they come across any such cases out in the field. Furthermore, they will be able to put into practice the skills attained."

Apart from our clinical staff, the nurses from the Port Moresby General Hospital and Paradise Private Hospital also took part in the training.

In total, 37 nursing officers and an HEO from the institutions including IMR graduated with certificates in Short Resuscitation Course,

Primary Trauma Care Course and Short Burns Course.

This training was made possible with support from Port Moresby General Hospital's Chief of Emergency Physician Dr Sam Yockopua and members of the South Pacific Society for Emergency Medicine - Dr Desmond Aisi, Dr John Tsiperau, Dr Denise Lee, Dr Scotty Kandelyo and Dr Duncan Sengiromo - who allowed our staff to undertake this training free-of-charge.

The South Pacific Society for Emergency Medicine was formed with the aim of training health professionals - both health workers and non-health workers in the region - with the skills and knowledge on emergency care. The Society hopes to conduct similar trainings in all provinces and districts in the country in the near future.

## Nationwide survey reveals poultry safe from bird flu

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influenza virus in poultry populations in PNG.

"Although there was no bird flu detected in poultry in this study, this does not necessarily mean that our country is at low risk for an outbreak," he said.

The recent detection of the avian influenza strain - H5N1 in Papua, Indonesia, is a concern for PNG as we share a land border with them.

Also the recent outbreak of Newcastle Disease virus in poultry populations in the north-west of PNG highlights the potential for the incursion of such diseases into the country.

"As such it is important that active long term sentinel surveillance continues or established at sites where there is a risk of avian influenza introduction especially along the borders."

"This is so that outbreak mitigation steps can be rapidly implemented in the event these diseases appear in PNG."

Avian influenza is a virus that is only found in aquatic birds but occasionally crosses natural species barriers and infect other bird species and mammals such as humans, pigs and horses.



A poultry farmer selling chickens at Seigu market in Goroka

**"...no detection of bird flu in poultry in this study does not necessarily mean that our country is at low risk for an outbreak."**



# Unsafe abortion study presented at conference

By Geraldine Vilakiva

On 23 January 2014, an A2 sized poster on Unsafe Abortion in PNG hung on display at the Philippines International Convention Centre, in Manila at the 7<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights.

Representing PNG were three medical professionals – Lisa Valley and Primrose Homiehombo, research midwives from the IMR's Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit, and Professor Glen Mola from the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of the Medical Faculty of the University of PNG.

The work presented by Primrose and Lisa formed part of a wider study on 'Pregnancy Loss' - a mixed methods study identifying spontaneous and induced abortions presenting to Eastern Highland Provincial Hospital over a six-month period in 2012.

The study was the first from PNG which investigated women's experiences, including clinical presentation at hospital, decision-making processes relating to induced abortion and women's experience of post abortion care access.

The poster included just some of the study findings relating to unsafe abortions.

It drew a large number of interested attendees from many countries, including India, Australia and Nepal. For social and cultural reasons, abortion remains illegal in PNG and this factor contributed to the interest from other countries.

As well as being an educational opportunity,



Lisa Valley (left) and Primrose Homiehombo during the 7th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights in Manila, Philippines.

Primrose described her trip to Manila as an 'eye opener'.

"There were an interesting number of topics covered, such as protecting sexual orientation and gender identity; women's rights to safe abortion services; access to medical abortion; infertility and surrogacy; and men's engagement in sexual and reproductive health," she recalled.

"One thing I realised was that there is a gap in adolescent sexual health research being conducted here in PNG and I think this needs to be addressed," she said.

Learning from their experience and the new information gained from the conference, Primrose and Lisa would like to develop a plan

for future research into adolescent sexual and reproductive health in PNG.

The conference provided an opportunity for participants to examine and learn from the performance of other countries within the Asia-Pacific Region. Also discussed was the challenge of sexual and reproductive health issues, especially as they relate to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The trip was sponsored by the Health and HIV Implementation Services Provider (HHISP) while the conference was organised by the Philippines NGO Council on Population Health and Welfare.

The next conference will be held in Myanmar in 2016.

**The study was the first from PNG which investigated women's experiences, including clinical presentation at hospital, decision-making processes relating to induced abortion and women's experience of post abortion care access.**

## Late party for Asaro DSS team



Early this year, the Asaro Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) team, including their reporters, held a late Christmas barbecue. The barbecue was especially to thank the reporters for their commitment and work in 2013. Reporters play an important role in research at IMR. For this group, they act as the bridge between the Asaro communities and the IMR and assist staff ensure that research work is carried out smoothly in the various communities in Asaro. The Asaro HDSS team are part of the Partnership in Health project.



# A young scientist's journey to a MSc

John Bosco Keven tells of his dream which took him to the States in this story



John (left) and his supervisor Dr Edward Walker during a baseball match in Michigan, USA

John Bosco Keven, from Manus, is a Senior Scientific Officer at the entomology section in our Madang branch.

This section studies insect vectors of human diseases in an effort to improve the health of Papua New Guineans and provide valuable data to the scientific community on tropical disease transmission. The section works on projects related to the ecology, behavior, genetics and transmission potential of mosquito vectors in PNG.

John first joined IMR in 2008 under our GIDRTP Fogarty Graduate program as a honours student. He was one of five Honour's students recruited that year.

In April 2010, John graduated with a Bachelor in Science – Honour's (first class) from the University of Papua New Guinea. His honour's project was the first to address physiological resistance to pyrethroid insecticides in mosquito vectors of malaria in PNG.

Later that year, John was invited to attend one of America's biggest society meetings – The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene meeting – in Atlanta, Georgia, to discuss his honour's research through seminar and poster presentations.

The meeting was significant for him as he met extraordinary people that week, some of whom would later become mentors and certainly friends.

A month after the meeting, he achieved another milestone in his career - his honors paper was published in the December 2010 issue of *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*.

After successfully completing his Honour's, his interest to continue on with a Masters program became obvious.

He decided to apply through the same GIDRTP Fogarty Graduate Program as it also caters for Masters and PhD programs.

His enthusiasm fell short after the IMR Training committee failed to endorse his application.

This did little to alter John's ambition to pursue his Masters so he decided to expand his scope and 'to look abroad' for other training and scholarship opportunities.

His dream was imminent when the US Embassy in Port Moresby invited applications for its 2011-2012 Fulbright International Scholarship's – an opportunity worth trying.

The rest was history.

In his own words, John retells his Master's journey.

"When the US Embassy in Port Moresby officially invited applications for the US Fulbright International Scholarship, I took it as a chance to try. After a rigorous screening and interview process, I was awarded a two-year scholarship to do a Master of Science (MSc) program at any US university of my choice. This news was well received and I got the support I needed from the IMR Training Committee.

By then I had established communications with Dr Edward Walker from Michigan State University (MSU) whom I met during the meeting in Atlanta so I did not have a

problem finding a suitable university and an academic supervisor. By August 2011, I found myself exploring the beautiful campus of MSU and getting busy in Dr Walker's Laboratory.

Prior to my arrival at MSU, the GIDRTP Fogarty coordinators from Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland had arranged with the Fulbright coordinators at the US Institute of International Education (IIE) to share my training expenses.

I was very excited when I received the news because I did not expect that Fogarty was keen in supporting me. So my tuition, health insurance, and travel expenses were paid by Fulbright and my stipends and research expenses were paid by the Fogarty. This was quite an experience for me to be on dual foreign scholarships, and I am not sure if I can ever have this kind of opportunity again.

I was admitted to the College of Natural Science as a medical entomology major and my program was administered through the Department of Entomology. However, I conducted my research in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics laboratory, where Dr Walker works.

This interdepartmental arrangement gave me an additional opportunity to learn things from both fields – Medical Entomology and Microbiology and Molecular Genetics. It also allowed me to

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# Johns' journey continues...

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use research facilities in both departments. In addition, I routinely travelled to Dr Peter Zimmerman's (my external supervisor) lab at CWRU to use their research facilities and to also acquire training.

My research project focused on the host-feeding ecology of mosquito vectors in disease endemic areas of PNG.

Generally, it is common knowledge that vector-borne disease pathogens such as malaria parasites or chikungunya virus are transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Mosquitoes act as hosts to these parasites and virus.

Despite numerous vertebrates that mosquitoes bite, some mosquito species seem to prefer humans more than the other animals.

As a result this tendency to feed more on humans, also called anthropophagy is considered a key environmental factor which is contributing to disease transmission. But when there is a decline in their level of tendency to bite humans, their ability to transmit human diseases also decreases.

Based on this information, my Master's project was focused on investigating the host-feeding ecology of mosquito vectors in disease endemic areas of PNG.

The main objective of the study was to determine the relative anthropophagy of female members of the *Anopheles punctulatus* mosquito species by comparing their relative human blood index (HBI). HBI is the ratio of the number of mosquitoes that feed on human blood to the total number of blood-fed mosquitoes. After collecting blood-fed mosquitoes from various sites in Madang province, laboratory-applied methods were used to further identify which vertebrate (humans or others), the mosquito fed from.

Through these methods, my study revealed that humans and domestic pigs were the most common and often the only

hosts that the *Anopheles* mosquitoes fed on even though other potential hosts were present in abundance.

The study further revealed that mosquito species *Anopheles punctulatus* s.s and *An. koliensis* had a greater tendency of feeding on humans compared to species *An. farauti* s.s, *An. longirostris* and *An. farauti* No.4, whilst *An. bancrofti* fed mostly on pigs.

The implications of these findings for malaria transmission in PNG are discussed in detail in my thesis 'The host-feeding ecology of mosquito vectors in the *Anopheles punctulatus* (Diptera: Culicidae) species complex in a malaria endemic province of Papua New Guinea'

This thesis was published by ProQuest UMI Thesis and Dissertations Publishing and can be accessed on this website <http://gradworks.umi.com/15/45/1545976.html>.

I am currently preparing a manuscript for publication of this work in a peer-reviewed journal.

In 2012, half-way through my Master's program, I submitted an application to the School of Natural science for a PhD program through the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics.

Not only was I admitted to begin in August 2013, the university offered to fully cover the expenses for the first year of my PhD program.

This was another exciting situation to experience. Unfortunately, the IMR training committee turned down my request to continue onto a PhD program due to the Institute's Training Policy which required a staff member to serve at least two years before pursuing further studies. So I agreed and returned to PNG after successfully defending my Master's thesis in August 2013 and was officially awarded an MSc degree on 13 December 2013. I am still passionate to pursue a PhD.

I am now a senior scientific officer in the Entomology section of the Vector Borne Disease Unit at our branch in Madang.

I play a major role in coordinating and

supervising the ICEMR transmission studies and also participate in other projects in our section. Apart from my main responsibilities, I spend a great deal of time and effort developing and running in-house capacity training programs for the technical and scientific staff in our section. This is a responsibility I feel obliged to do.

The experiences and insights I gained from my two years in the US have changed my world view forever.

I prefer not to discuss it here for to do so would require a separate article.

When my colleagues here at IMR ask me what I admire about US institutions that I would like to see in PNG Institutions, my response is "quality" and "efficiency", and at IMR, these two need major improvements at all levels.

When asked what challenges I faced in my studies, my response is coping with the high academic standard and expectations. When asked what one must keep in mind when, pursuing such academic endeavors, I respond by quoting Albert Einstein, "great spirits will often encounter violent opposition from weak minds."

Someone once asked me what was the most fun thing I did during my time in the US that I can still remember, I replied, "standing at the base of the newly built World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, New York city, and recalling the event I saw on TV on September 11, 2001 that shocked the entire world."

To me success is a result of passion and commitment to one's vision but also the ability to allow and appreciate the contribution and positive influence of people in your life.

I would like to acknowledge the IMR Director and training committee for approving my MSc training and for supporting me while on training, the Fulbright coordinators at the US Embassy in Port Moresby and IIE in the US for their support, Fogarty coordinators at CWRU for their administrative support, administrative staff at the graduate office in the MSU Entomology Department, field and scientific staff of the entomology section for assisting with my field sampling back in 2012, Dr. Lisa Reimer (former head of entomology) for the basic training I received in preparation for my MSc training, Dr Zimmerman for using his research facilities and introducing me to Dr Walker, Dr Walker for hosting me in his laboratory and most importantly my family for putting up with my absence during the two years.





# Accounts undergoes restructure

## IMR takes on Sybiz Vision to improve reporting

Our Accounts Unit has undergone a major restructure this year to improve its work output.

The restructure which came into effect at the beginning of the year includes both the unit's reporting process and its accounting system.

Reappointed Finance Manager, Ulo Jasipa, said the Unit has adopted a new accounting system - Sybiz Vision - to improve its work outputs especially reporting and bank reconciliations.

"Our main aim for getting the new system is that we wanted to improve on our bank reconciliations and bring them up-to-date. We want to improve on our reporting," said Ulo.

"The previous system, Peachtree, was good however, it did not give us the flexibility to do bank reconciliations while users were using the program, unlike Sybiz Vision," he said.

There are currently more than 30 accounts being managed by our Accounts Unit. Most of these accounts are for different research studies undertaken by the Institute.

Several of these studies are funded by overseas-based funding

agencies who have different requirements especially on financial reporting for the funds.

As such, the Institute needed a reliable and flexible accounting system that can carryout accounting functions with ease.

"Although it is too early to say, we are hoping this new system will greatly assist us with our work and also improve our reporting too." Samson Akunaii, Deputy Director for Corporate Affairs and Support Services said the changes are part of the Institute's strategies to address some of the critical challenges we are facing and especially in respect to the manner in which the finances of the Institute are managed.

"This includes reviewing the former Peachtree accounting system and adopting an accounting system which will meet the financial management needs of the Institute and its wider stakeholders," he said.

The Unit previously used Peachtree and prior to that, the ACCPAC accounting system. The Finance Unit has also undergone major staff reshuffles to improve its staff work output.

## New reforms in Finance Unit

The change to a new accounting system has resulted in the restructure of our Accounts Unit and changes in staff roles and responsibilities.

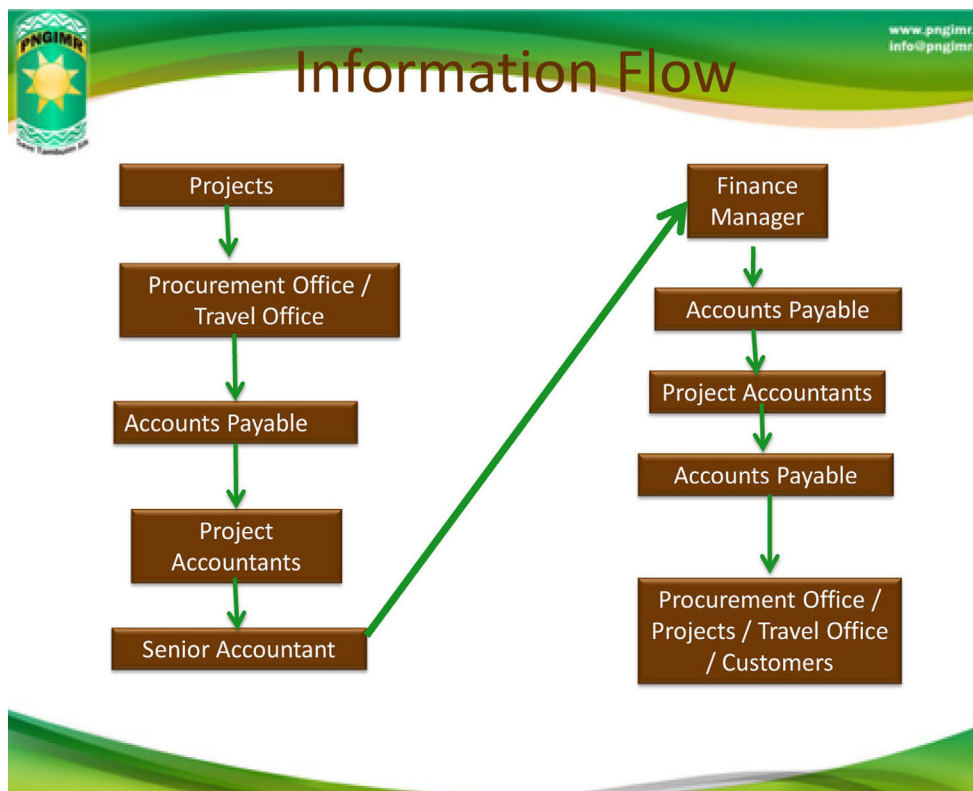
With this new system, accounts have been divided into six units; Corporate Affairs & Support Services (CASS), Population & Demographic Health (PHD), Immunity & Infectious Diseases (IAI), Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH) and Vector Borne Diseases (VBD), Environmental and Emerging Diseases (EED) and each project, based on its nature of study, has been categorised under each unit.

This has led to changes in project codes and the chart of accounts as well.

Our accounts staff, totalling 10, has been reassigned to various roles with the recent reappointment of Ulo Jasipa as the Head of Finance and Eunice Wotene being elevated to a Senior Operations Accountant position. The other changes include the appointments of four accountants:

Danny Saho will be in charge of CASS, Lorna Toso'o of IAI and EED, Levi Manenga of both SRH and VBD and is responsible to report for projects under CASS.

For Accounts Payable, Deborah Bob is responsible for CASS, Neal O'Neal for IAI, Carlvn Mageri for VBDU while Freda Ellison for SRHU. Pauline Arapuso is the Accounts Receivable Officer for all units.



A flow chart depicting the new procedures to follow when paying for goods and services that staff need to be aware of. This change follows the new restructure in the Finance Unit.

The PHD unit has not seen changes because it has two major projects - Malaria Control and Partnership in Health - which already have their own project accountants.

With these changes the project accountants are expected to maintain closer and proactive dialogue with project-based project management officers.

# The Corporate Affairs and Support Services (CASS) Update

with Samson Akunaii, Deputy Director for CASS



## Madang Laboratory and Office Development

The hoped for development funding support from the Department of National Planning for the Madang Laboratory and Office Development did not do well in the 2014 appropriations.

The bids are still with the Central Supply and Tenders Board (CSTB) in Port Moresby who are still awaiting the report of the Technical Evaluation Committee before they are progressed further and before a submission can be made by the CSTB to the National Executive Council and the successful tender is finally awarded.

## Gum Land Development

The contract for the earthworks for the proposed staff housing in Madang has already commenced. This contract was awarded to Samies Limited, a civil engineering contractor which has operational bases in Madang and Goroka.

The protracted delay on the development of this staff housing project was due to the transfer of the land title from the local land owner group to the Institute.

After lengthy followups and dialogue with the Department of Lands, we have been able to make some good progress.

This includes the transfer of the land titles from local land owners to IMR. Previously the land title was identified as Portion 1010C but is now known as Portion 1430 after it was transferred to IMR. Once the civil works with the compacting is completed, perimeter fencing will be erected before actual houses are constructed on the site.

## ICT Audit

The long awaited ICT audit was finally undertaken early this year, thanks to the support the DFAT/AusAID and HHSIP. A consultant was assigned to conduct the audit from 27 January to 4 February.

Consultant, Gavin Unsworth, began his audit with a comprehensive review of the existing ICT systems and processes at the Institute so as to ascertain its adequacy to meet the present and future needs of a growing institution.

This is the first time such an audit has been undertaken since the establishment of the

satellite internet based ICT services which is linked up to the PNG Arnet. It underwent its last upgrade in June 2010.

The audit included wider dialogue and consultation with key staff both in our Goroka and Madang branch to establish views and opinion on key focus on data collection, storage and analysis.

Some of the recommendations from the audit include:

- A complete network upgrade for Goroka branch and implementation of a structured cabling for the Madang branch.
- Rebuild virtual servers in Goroka, and eliminate redundant machines. Complete migration to new server in Madang.
- Conduct IT inventory at all IMR branches, covering both hardware and software.
- Increase internet bandwidth in Goroka, implement traffic management gateways at Goroka, Madang and Maprik and retire existing web proxies.
- Provide robust general staff printing facilities in Goroka along with a paper cut print management system to track usage and charge back to projects.
- Backup gaps to be closed and a disaster recovery plan to be drafted and implemented.

Other recommendations include resourcing the unit, supported by ongoing staff training of key ICT staff and the restructuring of the IT unit and re-writing of IT job descriptions.

Based on these recommendations, some of the issues that need immediate attention and which can be done internally are being worked on. The other major issues will be resolved when Gavin returns in April to work on the upgrades and to implement some of the changes identified and recommended.

## Grand send-off for Late Audrey Michael

On February 2, Audrey Michael passed away in Manila, in the Philippines, where she was undergoing medical attention.

Audrey was a very dedicated officer attached with the Infection and Immunity Unit based in Goroka. She began working with the Institute in June 1985.

The late Audrey in her professional life and



Late Audrey Michael

career was a role model, admired by her peers and young scientists within her section and the other units as well as a whole range of people whom she came in contact with either professionally or outside of work. She was described highly as a person who possessed qualities of humbleness and provided strong principals of Christianity, she instilled confidence and provided mentoring and guidance to young scientists to take their chosen careers seriously and to become role models.

The care and support provided to the late Audrey by the management and staff of the Institute demonstrated the respect and admiration she had at the Institute.

The late Audrey was finally laid to rest just behind the family home in her Wamira village in Milne Bay province on 15 February 2014. Three IMR staff, representing the Institute accompanied the casket and her daughters to Alotau and handed her to her family in Alotau. The late Audrey is survived by her son Lawrence and two daughters Mary and Joy.

The management and staff of the Institute nationwide thank the children and relatives of the late mama Audrey for her distinguished contributions to the Institute.

Her memory will live on at the Institute.

- **Read about our Training updates for this quarter on page 8.**



# EHP Gov't backs Symposium

The 2014 Medical Symposium Committee has been given a K20,000 boost to kick-start its fundraising activities for the 50<sup>th</sup> Medical Symposium this year.

This commitment came from the Eastern Highlands Provincial Government and the Governor Julie Soso, who is also the Patron of the symposium.

While launching the symposium's fundraising drive on behalf of the Governor, acting Provincial Administrator, Bill Kavanamur said the province was proud to host this year's symposium.

Mr Kavanamur said the symposium was an avenue where important health issues and solutions were discussed and would support it.

"The Provincial Administration recognises the importance of this event and will back the organizing committee to host the event successfully," he said.

Symposium Committee Chairman and also the PNG Medical Society Vice-President, Professor Peter Siba thanked the Provincial Government and the Governor for teaming up with committee to host this event.

**This year being its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the symposium will discuss the health sector's 'achievements over the last 50 years and future challenges'.**

He said such activities needed the support of such stakeholder's in order to achieve the symposium's objectives.

The symposium is an annual event that attracts medical experts from PNG and overseas.

It discusses findings from clinical & biomedical research, evaluates disease patterns, health service delivery and management among others.

With PNG being a country which has one of the world's lowest health indicators, the symposium gives an opportunity to unite all stakeholders such the government, health service providers, medical researchers and the global health community to contribute ideas to address health issues.

This year being its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the symposium will discuss the health sector's 'achievements over the last 50 years and

future challenges'.

It will look at everything achieved since 1964 such as training of health professionals, infrastructural developments, current health concerns and diseases that have been eradicated or controlled.

Also at the launching were representatives from various business houses within the province who pledged to support this important event.

The symposium will be co-hosted by the Eastern Highlands Provincial Health Authority and the PNG Institute of Medical Research and will be held from 31 August – 5 September.

It is an annual event of the PNG Medical Society.

The Medical Society is the only professional society in PNG to have hosted an event successfully for 50 years.

## HR's work attachment at Murdoch Institute

One vital aspect of research at IMR is the training. We value our staff development trainings for both our scientific and corporate affairs staff.

In December 2013, Human Resource Manager, Denver Kave completed a week-long work attachment at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) in Melbourne, Australia.

Murdoch like IMR is a research institute but its research work is more specific to children-related illness.

The work attachment was the first for our Corporate Affairs staff and it allowed Denver to gain an insight into HR functions in general at MCRI with a view of how his experiences can help in improving the current HR system back at IMR.

Denver was attached to MCRI's HR Unit where he was able to get first-hand information studying and understanding how their HR system works.

This include the kind of system they have in place, its functions and how effective it is; the problems associated with it and the actions they took in dealing with various HR



Human Resource Manager, Denver Kave

issues that arose in line with the Australian Labour Law and the Fair Work Australia.

Despite the short time, Denver said it was a worthwhile experience and an eye-opener.

"I learnt a lot of new things in terms of HR, one in particular which would greatly benefit IMR is the HRIS system they had in

place which is called HR Connect."

"It is very easy and user friendly and is web-based. Thus, all HR related work is done online and employees have their HR records on the system as well which they can access anywhere in the world."

"The new system has also enabled their HR Unit to move into 'paperless' operations as most of the functions were done online using their HR system, which was very rewarding and interesting to learn about."

During that time, Denver was able to establish a dialogue for a possible agreement between the two institutions for future engagements for staff which is yet to be formalised.

This work attachment was made possible through the Training Unit and Denver's personal contacts in Melbourne.

"Work attachment is one way to boost staff morale and enhance performance and productivity and as such the Training Unit must work in close collaboration with our partner research institutions to facilitate such on the job experience for all staff, both in the Science and CASS," he said.

# Training Nius

Training Nius is compiled by Dickson Kuvi (Training Officer) and John Yogiyo (Assistant Training Officer).

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## Post Graduate Studies

### Masters

Dulcie Lautu, a staff from our Madang Branch has completed her two years Masters studies last year through the AusAID scholarship. She studied at the University of Western Australia.

Marinjho Jonduo of the Environment and Emerging Diseases Unit based at our Goroka branch left in March for the University of Tokyo, School of International Health to undergo two-year Masters Study in International Health. She was one of the successful recipients of the Asian Development Bank Scholarship Program.

### Honours Students

Our 2013 four honours students under the PiH Training Program have defended their thesis and are awaiting graduation. These four are Nola N'Drewei (Sexual Reproductive Health Unit), Benishar Kombut (Vector Borne Disease Unit), Tilda Orami (Infectious & Immunity) and Joe Jude (Infectious & Immunity).



## Other Training News

### CASS Units to participate in Weekly Seminars

All our Corporate Affairs and Support Services Units (CASS) will be participating in the Weekly Seminar schedules for this year. This is only for our Goroka branch staff and is the first time for CASS units to be included, previously, it was more concentrated on science and research.

The weekly seminars are held every Wednesday with the aim of informing staff on various research or work being carried out at the Institute.

### Training report compulsory for all staff trainings

Come this year, all staff who attend any sort of trainings this include study, work attachment, short courses, conferences will be required to provide an account of their trainings two weeks after they return from their sanctioned trainings.

This will be in the form of a written report and also a presentation to all staff during the Weekly Wednesday seminars at their branches.

The aim of this is to allow staff to share and present what they have learnt and acquire from their attendance so to build staff capacity to communicate to a wider audience and provide information on the knowledge acquired and its influence and impact upon their respective roles and

duties. The seminar committee has begun scheduling respective staff and will present in the coming weeks.

### Additional staff for Training office

With the increase in the research activities, workloads and the need for additional staff, the management has approved the recruitment of an additional staff to join the training staff.

Mexy Kakazo who used to be a Principle scientific officer with the Partnership in Health project contracted by the Exxon Mobil is now with the training office bringing the number of staff in the Training Unit to three.

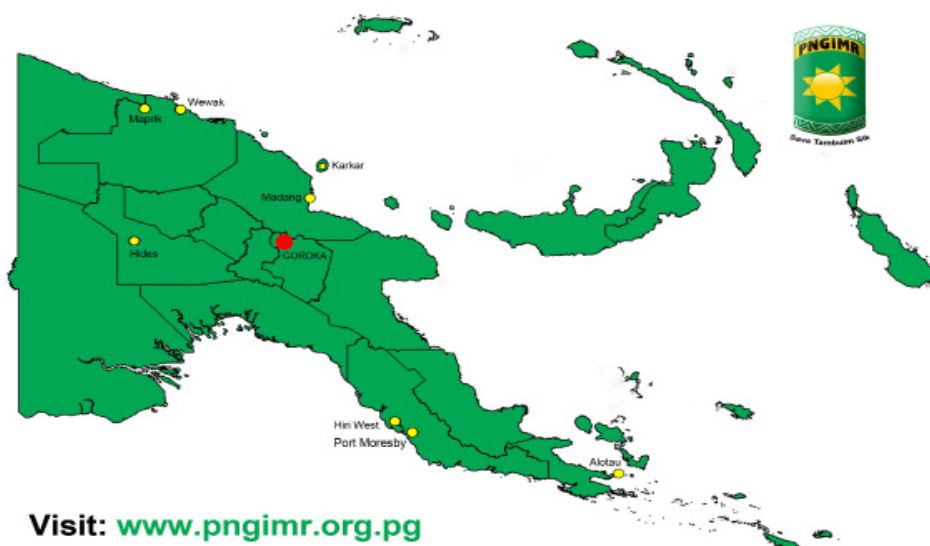
Our Training office looks after all training needs of all employees working in the five branches of IMR.

It operates on open door policy to assist staff who wish to peruse long term and short term trainings, Post Graduate studies or scholarships.

### Behavioural researcher enrolls in UOG Masters program

Agnes Mek, a behavioural researcher with our Sexual Reproductive Health Unit is currently doing her Masters' Degree at the University of Goroka. She is attached to the School of Humanities - Communication and Social Change. Her studies began this year.

## OUR LOCATIONS



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