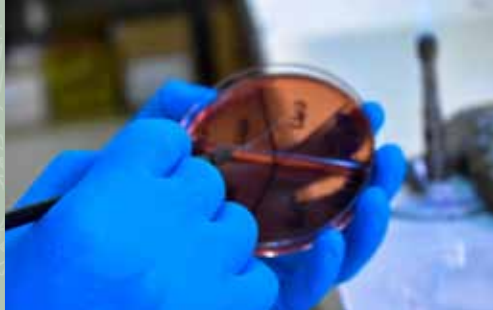




IMR NIUS

ISSUE 56 | 3rd Quarter | Jul - Sep 2018

NEWSLETTER OF THE PNG INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH



Sir Puka praises PNGIMR on turning 50

By Elishebah Musia

One of the very important milestone occasions of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) was hosted in Goroka at the Bird of Paradise Hotel-celebrating the 50th Anniversary. The Minister for Health, Dr Sir Puka Temu, who was present at the opening, expressed gratitude and congratulated the Institution for reaching 50 years.

"I would like to thank the landowners for realizing this strong position the Institute holds as well as the importance of it, and have given support in which the PNGIMR has scored 50 this year, which is seven years older than our independent state of PNG," said Sir Puka.

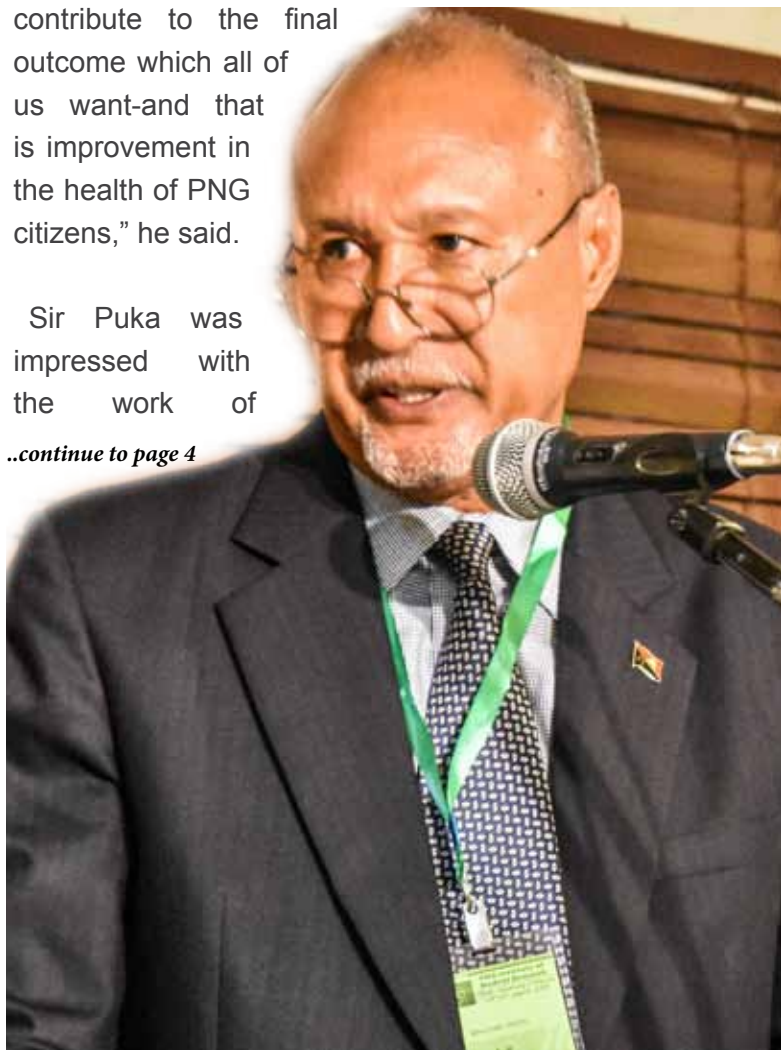
He stated that in 2025, PNG will celebrate its 50th anniversary as an independent nation and the Prime Minister of that time will read the score card of this nation in terms of development.

"Today, I believe the score card as started by Dick Hornabrook, Michael Alpers, John Reeder, Peter Siba and other former directors of PNGIMR are enormous. This Institution has paved a way to eventually

contribute to the final outcome which all of us want-and that is improvement in the health of PNG citizens," he said.

Sir Puka was impressed with the work of

..continue to page 4



National Gaming Control Board
Major sponsor of the PNG Institute of Medical Research
Fiftieth Anniversary Colloquium

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

INSIDE

Director's message

Hello and welcome to the 56th issue of the IMR Nius.

This edition of newsletter is special, it focus mainly on stories and announcements from the recent fiftieth anniversary celebration of the 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 an agent for social change in inspiring, developing us, and actively encouraging us to promote ownership and responsibility while carrying out our duties.

This third quarter has provided a number of highlights, most of which are from the fiftieth anniversary.

On behalf of staff and management I congratulate Dr Angela Kelly and Dr Andrew Vallely for being recognized as Professors. 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 continuing 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.

In the spirit of team work I would like to sincerely thank the PNGIMR staff and the PNGIMR 50th Anniversary Committee for standing together and hosting a successful 50th Anniversary celebrations 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 have celebrated our 50th Anniversary, let us look forward and ask ourselves what the PNGIMR can become 50 years from now. Let us be proud of the past achievements, celebrate current achievements and learn from the challenges to build a better future. That dream starts today in all that we do together as staff of the PNGIMR.

Dr William Pomat, Director

- 2** Director's Message
- 3** Sir Peter Salutes work of PNGIMR
- 4** In briefs
- 6** Dr Pomat emphasises on building partnerships
- 7** Lymphatic filariasis study published
- 8** 50 years of PNG Institute of Medical Research
- 9** Dr Laman acknowledges collaborators
- 10** Fiftieth colloquium in pictures
- 12** Council chairman declares new director
- 13** Prof Crabb: Fifty years is an incredible achievement
- 14** Award announcements
- 15** Kaldor: Australian government has been the helm of PNGIMR
- 16** Mr Davies announces the position of strategic advisor
- 17** Ms Maalsen's attention on health
- 18** Staff interview
- 20** Long service staff awarded

Sir Peter salutes work of PNGIMR

By Elishebah Musia

"It is really a great privilege for me to be here tonight as I am also celebrating my 50th anniversary at the same time."

This was according to the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research's (PNGIMR's) Patron, Sir Peter Barter, during the opening ceremony of the PNGIMR 50th Anniversary.

Sir Peter gave a brief history of how he came to Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province while serving with Territory Airlines and how he was associated with PNGIMR.

"I first became aware of the existence of IMR going back to the day it was actually born. It was Dick Hornabrook who was in charge of the Institute of Human Biology at that time when I lived in Goroka," he said.

During the time that Sir Peter has been associated with IMR indirectly, he stated that he had the opportunity of meeting so many people and said he has had a lot of fond memories in Goroka.

"I have done some of the work with the Melanesian Foundation outside politics and again I have been

associated with PNGIMR in a way building aid post, reassuring health services and hospitals, and flying patients to and fro," he said.

He added that he was concerned a little about delivering health services equally throughout PNG and he knows some of the work requires training of people to go back to their rural areas, thus he strongly advised that anything to do with health and research, must be sure to be sustainable.

"I do know that through the work of IMR, many thousands of people live longer today and live a healthy life, and that is what we're here for, that is the purpose for being here because we extend the lives and made a perfect quality of life for people especially in the rural areas," he stated.

He assured everyone that there will be a lot of deliberation, and he knows that the outcome of this colloquium of celebrating their past achievements and the upcoming ones will be recognized some day.

Sepik staff presents live crocodile

PNGIMR staff from Maprik and Wewak presented a live crocodile to the organising committee and the staff of PNGIMR Goroka.

Led by the East Sepik Provincial Administrator, Dr Clement Malau, the crocodile was given as a gesture of gratitude and a significant offering to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute. Dr Malau also presented a wooden plaque to the acting Director, Dr William Pomat, as a gift from the staff in East Sepik Province to the Institute.



IMR collaborators recognized

Long term collaborators of IMR were acknowledged in a small presentation ceremony during the fiftieth anniversary dinner at the Bird of Paradise Hotel.

Scientists who have spend decades in building the IMR to what it is today, in terms of study grants, technical expertise and capacity building for local scientists, were given certificates of recognition by the Institute.

Among the recipients was the former IMR Deputy director – Science and research, and long time malaria researcher Dr Ivo Mueller.

Sir Puka: Subject of ‘Public Health’ taken on by IMR



continued from page 1

PNGIMR and declared that he is a committed supporter of the work carried out by the Institution.

He said the PNGIMR has a significant place in the health sector of this nation, and since its establishment, the Institute has conducted research that has informed and assisted to changing health policies in the country to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens.

“I have always admired the PNGIMR and the high accolade it receives, and visitations to the office and laboratory facilities from high distinguish people and dignitaries are an expression of the excellent work that is produced by this important institution,” he said.

He added that this excellent accolade cannot be expressed without the dynamic leadership and help and untiring efforts of its hard working staff, its collaborating partners and many of its stakeholders.

Sir Puka said despite the growth of the Institute and the increase in the scope and activities of its work, he is pleased to note that the Institute continues to be focused on the relevance of its work towards the health priorities.

“Over the years, the subject ‘Public Health’ has not been taken on by the Department of Health (DoH) but by the PNGIMR,” he gladly said.

He concluded by asking, “Can we bring this Institute to the highest level it can, that not only its focus is purely on medical research but look at this issue and at least address public health policies, public health programs, epidemiology etc, and build this Institution into a complete set, bring it to a very high level so that it commands the respect once again and the support that it needs over the years?”

“I have always admired the PNGIMR and the high accolade it receives..”

IMR's milestone occasion a step forward for the Province – Akunaii



By Elishebah Musia

According to former PNGIMR Deputy Director – Corporate Affairs and Support Services (CASS) now Provincial Administrator of Eastern Highlands (EHP), Samson Akunaii, the Provincial Administration are trying to promote Goroka as a tourism and business destination.

“I would like to thank Professor William Pomat and his hard working staff at the PNGIMR to host such an occasion here in Goroka. This occasion marks a very important occasion and we would like to encourage more of these things to happen in here to promote our tourism and our hospitality industry as well as to attract the business in the province,” he said.

Mr Akunaii said that as a former employee, it reminds him of the resilience of the staff generally right across the Institute.

“We have a spirit of blending together to put up such occasions like this and this occasion today is a testimony of the resilience of the staff of PNGIMR,” he said.

He added that PNGIMR as a government institution has endured the test of time and remains strong and steadfast in its endeavour to promote and enhance its mandate.

“I think there are many positive attribute that is within the Institute which is absent in other main government departments and agencies,”

“I think there are many positive attribute that is within the Institute which is absent in other main government departments and agencies,” said Mr Akunaii.

He concluded by saying, “I want to salute all past directors and the current director for continuing to light the fire and the spirit of PNGIMR. And on the same token, I also want to sincerely thank the Minister for Health, Sir Puka Temu for bringing IMR under its wing when the former government decided to cut its budget and contribution.”



Dr Pomat emphasizes on building partnerships

By Elishebah Musia

The Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) celebrated its Fiftieth anniversary and marked 50 years of tremendous hard work that the Institute has done in medical research for the better health and wellbeing of the citizens of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

During the opening ceremony, hosted at the Bird of Paradise Hotel, the PNGIMR Director, Professor William Pomat talked of the importance of coming up with new plans for the Institute in the upcoming years and what to expect after the next

10 years after being challenged by the words of the Minister for Health, Sir Puka Temu.

“Everyone present in this room, are the beginning of the challenge that Minister Sir Puka has provided, and that is-Will we continue the same for the next 50 years or is there space to reorient this jewel to another level? And it starts this week as we start on for the next 50 years – a lot of us won’t

get there but I’m sure as the sun sets on a lot of us, the sun will rise on a lot more,” said Prof. Pomat.

He encouraged the staff that as part of their job they need to mentor new people coming up, making sure they (new staff) are ready for the future and are ready to celebrate the 60th year and then they will also train others over the years.

He said, “The main point I’d like to say is that partnership is probably the most critical element in all the work that we do here. There needs to be a partnership with you as

our collaborators, partnership with the department, and partnership with provincial health but more importantly partnership with the community.”

He further added that in order to build those partnerships, it has to start today and continue on in the next 50 years so that we have more partnerships to carry the work of the Institute.

“Everyone present in this room, are the beginning of the challenge..and it starts this week...”

PNGIMR thanks sponsors and supporters

The PNG Institute of Medical Research staff and management would like to convey their gratitude towards the sponsors and supporters of the fiftieth anniversary celebration.

To all individual contributors listed:

- Sir Peter Barter
- Hon. Henry T Ame, Member for Goroka
- EH Provincial Administrator, Samson Akunaii
- Dr Deborah Lehmann & Dr Michael Alpers
- Dr Julie Kep
- Dr Anup Gurung
- Dr Rebecca Ford
- Cynthia & John Leahy
- Dr William & Norries Pomat
- Dr Johanna Wapling
- Sarah Yarsley
- Rena Edwards
- Nelly Saweri
- Sinafa Robby
- Elisheba Malau
- Stanley Gotaha
- Alwyn Hamena
- Hon. Wera Mori, Min. for Trade commerce & industry
- Prof Robin Anders
- Hon. Saki Soloma, Okapa MP
- Dr Suparat Phuanukoonon & Dr Ivo Mueller
- Donald Gumbis
- Samson Javati

Thank you

Lymphatic filariasis study being published

By Elishebah Musia

A study which was published on 8 November in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) portrays another imposing achievement for the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) with the solution of a new treatment killing microscopic larval worms in people diagnosed with lymphatic filariasis (LF).

According to one of the principal investigator of the study, Leanne Robinson, the findings published in NEJM represent a substantial

step forward in providing evidence on the safety and superior efficacy of a triple-drug combination.

“This study paved the way for PNGIMR to lead a larger community randomized safety, efficacy and effectiveness trial in the Dreikikir District of East Sepik and Bogia District of Madang Province. PNGIMR is working alongside the PNG National LF Control Program and international collaborators to try and find more efficient mass drug administration strategies to accelerate the control and elimination of lymphatic filariasis in PNG,” she said.

Collectively, all findings of the study presented in the Journal indicate that the three-drug regimen produces constant clearance of microscopic worms in almost all persons who receive the treatment.

Another principal investigator of the study Professor Christopher King, from Case Western Reserve concluded that, after working on lymphatic filariasis for over 25 years in PNG, it is very gratifying to see a pathway for its eventual elimination in the next few years.



PNGIMR Staff and management would like to thank the following institutions, businesses, government departments and agencies for their support and contribution towards the fiftieth anniversary colloquium.



Eastern Highlands Provincial Government

**H E N O N I
MOLATUNI**



LAISANS AUTOPARTS

Safety & First Aid



PNG Department of Trade Commerce & Industry



Pacific Gardens Hotel



The TRAVEL HAUS



Bintagor Trading



WAUKAVE LIMITED



50 years of Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research

Swiss Tropical & Public Health Institute Media



Recent trends in malaria in Papua New Guinea show a worrying increase, despite strong efforts being made towards elimination.

(Photo: Olga Fontanellaz)

The Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR), a long-standing partner of Swiss TPH, celebrates its 50th anniversary. Swiss TPH will take part in the anniversary colloquium from 28 to 31 August to highlight the fruitful collaboration between the two institutes and to further strengthen efforts towards malaria elimination.

From 28 to 31 August 2018, the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) is celebrating its 50th anniversary, bringing together local and international researchers to discuss challenges and successes in the field of medical research in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Swiss TPH researchers Hans-Peter Beck and Manuel Hetzel will participate in a panel discussion and symposium to highlight the collaboration and research partnership that has existed since 1976. "The collaboration with our colleagues in PNG is a great example of an international research partnership benefitting both PNGIMR and Swiss TPH," said Hans-Peter Beck, Head of the Molecular Parasitology and Epidemiology unit at Swiss TPH.

Worrying increase of malaria in Papua New Guinea

PNG is at a key stage of controlling and eliminating malaria, having achieved large reductions in prevalence throughout the country following mass distribution of mosquito nets. Despite this encouraging progress, there are risks of widespread rebounds. While the prevalence of malaria in PNG declined substantially until 2014 mainly thanks to the availability of mosquito nets; between 2014 and 2017, the country experienced a sudden increase.

"This worrying surge in malaria is probably due to a combination of factors including insufficient number of nets, fatigue with regards to their use, stock-outs of anti-malarial drugs, and the widespread habit of malaria mosquitoes in PNG to bite outdoors and in recent years, to bite to earlier in the evening," said Manuel Hetzel, Research Group Leader in the Health Interventions unit at Swiss TPH. "To eliminate malaria from PNG in the long run, more resources need to be invested to strengthen the health system, increase coverage with interventions and test and deploy new and innovative tools."

Hetzel will present the results of four nationwide



malaria surveys at the Annual Symposium of the PNG Medical Society following the anniversary colloquium.

Longstanding Swiss-PNG partnership

For decades, Swiss TPH researchers and PNGIMR have worked towards controlling and eliminating malaria in PNG through laboratory and clinical studies and large scale operational research and impact evaluations.

Swiss TPH and PNGIMR are supporting the national malaria programme and are involved in a new round of nationwide malaria evaluation from 2018 to 2020. Both parties are also involved in field studies which investigate reasons for on-going residual transmission of malaria.

Research in malaria diagnostics

Swiss TPH together with PNGIMR and other partners also just published a study in the Lancet Infectious Diseases assessing the minimum essential sensitivity of diagnostic tests for detection of asymptomatic malaria patients in PNG. Results found that rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs), including a novel ultra-sensitive RDT, cannot replace molecular diagnostics for identifying potential malaria transmitters. These findings will help guide future malaria interventions in elimination settings such as PNG.

Future plans for an evaluation of an automatic malaria slide reader as an innovative diagnostic tool are also in the works, which could play a significant role in malaria surveillance activities.

Dr Laman acknowledges support from collaborators



The Vector borne unit in Madang has been the forefront of research that has led to the change in global guidelines. Unit head Dr Moses Laman, while reflecting on the past ten years, praised the effort of the collaborators and mentors who made it possible for research to continue.

Dr Laman said that the great achievements of the unit is a reflection of the amount of support they get from collaborators. He added that working closely with the collaborators has helped the new generation of scientists including himself, get research grants.

“These (collaborators) people allow us to be competitive and to continue winning grants and I think this is the fundamental reason why the Vector borne unit has been successful,” Dr Laman said

“This fiftieth anniversary celebration is not only to congratulate the work of IMR but also to thank these people who have dedicated their lives to work in PNG,”

Dr Laman concluded by saying that a strong collaborative partnership ensures that both parties share mutual benefits.

Pictures from the fiftieth anniversary colloquium



Pictures from the fiftieth anniversary colloquium



Council chairman declares Dr Pomat as new Director

By Elishebah Musia



Sir Isi Kevau – Chairman of PNGIMR Council

The Chairman of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) Council, Dr, Sir Isi Kevau, made a declaration that Dr William Pomat is the Director of PNGIMR. This was during the 50th Anniversary celebrated in August.

“We are witnessing all the things that have happened in this beautiful, successful Institute, and also we look back and embrace all the names that have been mentioned,” he said.

Sir Isi recalls he remembered Dick Hornabrook, who was the first Director of the then Institute of Human Biology.

“I remember him coming over from a medical school and he was introduced to us as a Neurologist, and as a fourth year medical student, he mentioned something to us- there is a carotid artery below the left chin and you must look for a carotid bruit in people who might have a stroke,” said Sir Isi.

He added that a carotid bruit in Papua New Guinea (PNG) was unheard of, and most of the patients that they see who are coming with the stroke have carotid bruit. His remembrance of Dick Hornabrook is along those lines.

He commended the other Directors after Dick Hornabrook like Michael Alpers for doing a beautiful job, John Reeder came along and followed the same footstep and then Peter Siba came and also did a

wonderful job, as well as the others who he missed.

“Like life in general, things do come to an end so Peter Siba left. Now we are in the new era, as of today, I make the announcement to all of you in this room that I as the Chairman of the PNGIMR Council declare that Dr William Pomat is now our Director,” he concluded.

Meanwhile, Dr William Pomat was in shock and said he did not expect the announcement to be made and claimed words cannot express how grateful he is. He thanked everyone for believing in him, and also thanked the Council for allowing him to continue in a more permanent position. “Thank you to all the staff over the last 18 months who have really being supportive – to Angela, Moses, Rebecca, Bang and all the staff under each of those units as well as the staff in the Administration who have continued to do the work that we want to be done,” he said.



Newly appointed Director of PNGIMR, Dr William Pomat.

Prof Crabb: Fifty years is an incredible achievement

By *Elishebah Musia*

It is normal for any organizations to face tough times in a crisis and 50 years of any organizations in any circumstance in any country, for profit or not for profit, for public good or for any other reason is an incredible achievement.

“To do it in any circumstance that the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) has done is extraordinary,” said the Director and CEO at Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health, Professor Brendan Crabb, during the 50th anniversary.

Prof. Crabb said he finds research to be undervalued and relative to its contribution to whatever the discipline is in this case to the health of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

“So to survive and thrive and to contribute so extraordinary to global health, not just PNG health, in a way that we’ve seen over the last couple of days is incredible and the tribute goes to the IMR staff and to the council who oversee it,” he said.

He added that home grown settings most definitely is the core of that success, but the partnerships have played a very important role and its Buttressing Coalition is effectively formalising an association with those international partners from abroad.

“Collaborations are important, we all inherently as researchers with the medical research and science background know that, but the nature of the collaborations with PNG and the partnerships that the Buttressing Coalition is looking to foster is much more a project by project,” he said.

It is so obvious that the excellent work done by the PNGIMR and its quality is fantastic, which makes the



Prof Brendan Crabb
Director of Burnette Institute

achievement all the more extraordinary.

“So I hope the buttressing coalition’s contribution in fostering that culture is its most significant and enduring one. Another contribution is advocacy, many buttressing coalition members work very hard to advocate for the PNGIMR in all sakes,” he said.

Prof. Crabb concluded that one way to perform research that underpins lazar targeted health programs in a way that allows PNG to punch way above its economic weight and the PNGIMR and its research

“To get here, to be thriving and going better than ever after 50 years is something miracle and you all should be hugely congratulated for,”

partners throughout PNG have been absolutely crucial to that.

“To get here, to be thriving and going better than ever after 50 years is something miracle and you all should be hugely congratulated for,” he said.

The Audrey Michael award announcement

The Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) celebrated its 50th Anniversary in August this year and a number of important announcements were declared wherein one of them was the Audrey Michael Award.

The announcement was made by Dr Andrew Greenhill, Senior Lecturer in Microbiology and Fermentation Technology, at the Federation University, Australia.

According to Dr Greenhill, the Audrey Michael Award for exemplary service to the PNGIMR seeks to acknowledge staff members who have given excellent service to the Institute and exhibits at least some of the characteristics of Audrey Michael.

Over the past 50 years, the Institute has been dedicated to improving the health of the people



Late Audrey Michael who was a Principal Lab Technologist at IMR, served the institute for 29 years until her passing in 2014

of Papua New Guinea (PNG) through a greater understanding of the important diseases that affect them, leading to preventive and control strategies.

“The excellent work of PNGIMR would not be possible without many dedicated and loyal staff members

like the late Audrey Michael,” he said.

“The staff of PNGIMR have raised an enormous amount of money, and dedicated considerable time to make this event happen. It is up to us, the external collaborators, to fund this award for IMR staff and

Dr Andrew Greenhill making the announcement at the Bird of Paradise Hotel in Goroka.

(L-R) Prof Alpers, Prof Lehmann, Ms Michael (daughter of late Audrey) and Mitton Yohaness.



not the staff themselves,” said Dr Greenhill.

He added that it is hoped that the costs associated with the award can be met through the Buttressing Coalition.

Mrs Audrey Michael commenced work in the Bacteriology Laboratory at PNGIMR in 1985, having previously completed training in Medical Laboratory Technology. Over time Audrey became a highly skilled and knowledgeable bacteriologist.

Dr Greenhill confessed that when he arrived at IMR in 2008 as Head of Bacteriology and got to know Audrey and her great skills, he wondered why there was any need to employ him.

Meanwhile, the Audrey Michael Award will be presented to a member of staff who has, in the view of the selection committee, adequately demonstrated the following values – dedication to the goals of the Institute; integrity; mentorship and/or pastoral care; humility; promotion of gender equity; and, loyalty to the Institute and colleagues.

“I would like to thank all those who have helped with the establishment of this award as well as thank Audrey’s family for their blessing to announce an award in her honour. And finally, thanks to Audrey for leaving a legacy that all of us in this room can strive to emulate,” he concluded.

Telethon Kids Institute researcher recognized for saving children in PNG

Clinical Professor **Associate Deborah**

Lehmann has been recognized for her dedication to reducing the burden of infectious diseases in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with an award supporting research in the Western Pacific named in her honour.

Announced on the 29th August at the PNG Institute of Medical Research’s 50th Anniversary celebrations, the Deborah Lehmann Research Award acknowledges Professor Lehmann’s significant contribution towards preventing pneumococcal disease – a major killer of young children in PNG and other developing countries.

Working closely with the PNG Institute of Medical Research, Professor Lehmann has been investigating which pneumococcal vaccines can provide the best possible protection for babies in this region and the optimum time to provide them.

“The impact of Professor Lehmann’s work in PNG over the past 30 years is impossible to measure,” said Dr Tom Snelling, Director of the Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases at the Telethon Kids Institute.

“We know pneumonia is responsible for over one million childhood deaths around the world each year, so Professor Lehmann’s work preventing pneumococcal disease has the potential to save the lives of many thousands of

babies,” said Dr Snelling.

Professor Lehmann lived and worked in PNG, where she is affectionately known as ‘Mama Deborah’, for nearly two decades before moving to Australia to continue her research. She has made a long-lasting impression on those who have been fortunate to work with her throughout her career, including the numerous researchers she has mentored who are following in her footsteps to build on the work she has accomplished.

“We are very proud to announce this Award in recognition of Professor Lehmann’s work in PNG, and we look forward to seeing young researchers continuing her legacy by providing better prevention and treatment solutions for children in this region,” said Dr Snelling.

In addition to her work in PNG, Professor Lehmann is a medical practitioner with research expertise in acute respiratory infections, otitis media (middle ear infections) and Aboriginal health, and was named Officer of the Order of Australia in 2012.

The Deborah Lehmann Research Award, supported by the Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases, will provide training and development for early career researchers and students in the Western Pacific Region who are investigating infectious diseases in children.

Mr Davis announces the position of Strategic Advisor

By Elishebah Musia



The Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) has such an important place to play in the professional development with many researchers, clinicians, scientists and academics not only over the last 50 years but no doubt over the next 50 years.

The Australian government has agreed to provide a strategic advisor to the Director of PNGIMR for a period of up to four years. This joint announcement was made between the Australian High Commissioner-His Excellency Mr Bruce Davis and the Head of Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security Dr Robin Davies.

"PNGIMR has identified the establishment of this position as a high priority; certainly it will be a position that will in its final grounds be chosen by the Director. We are very happy to be associated with that process but we are also conscious that it must be a resource that works under the direction of IMR itself," said Mr Davis.

He said, "What's being proposed is that, this strategic advisable position will help identify strengths and weaknesses and recommend reforms to maximise use of limited resources. The advisor can also play a role in mentoring permanent IMR staff so they can continue this work beyond the life

of the position." Meanwhile, the Indo-Pacific Centre is in active discussions with the Australian research partner organizations on ways to raise funds for the PNGIMR.

The funds brought together between the Institutions as well as input from the Australian government will be used for capacity development, minor capital investments and limited consumables.

"We hope to make an announcement shortly about further financing which would be much more in that nature of co-funding for PNGIMR over the coming years," he said.

In conclusion, Mr Davis thanked the PNGIMR for celebrating their birthday and congratulated their 50 glorious years.

"Your success will impart the success of Australia too," he said.

Kaldor: The Australian government has been the helm of PNGIMR

The Australian government has been a supporter of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) through various mechanisms, direct funding as well as project funding.

This statement was according to Professor John Kaldor, Professor and Program Head of Public Health Interventions Research Group at the Kirby Institute, during the 50th anniversary celebrations.

"The good news is that there is a very clear focus and a clear understanding from the Australian government now of how important the PNGIMR is and not just how important it is to Papua New Guinea (PNG) and its relationships with PNG but also to our region and the role that has a quite unique entity in this part of the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

Prof. Kaldor added that there is

a new focus in the Indo-Pacific Centre for health security to be used as a vehicle for funding to support research and build research capacity.

"As part of the ongoing discussion, the way research is funded with the help of the Buttressing Coalition has evolved and we need to understand that it is an important indication of an evolving and maturing society even with more limit resources."

continue to page 17



Ms Maalsen's centre of attention is on Health

By Elishebah Musia

During the second day of the 50th anniversary celebrations, one of the Keynote speakers, Team Leader of Health Systems and Social Determinants of Health of the World Health Organization (WHO), Ms Anna Maalsen talked about the importance of health.

"Health is really at the centre of everything at the moment and is also the centre of the global development agenda. Good health and wellbeing is the theme of the sustainable development goal (SDG) 3 but is also a key to sustaining and achieving several of our other goals," said Dr Anna.

She said health has finally been recognized as the driver of development and human progress, thus here in PNG, it is seen as a central development agenda and there is a strong commitment by the government to improve universal quality health care.

"This is good news, but it makes our mission in public health much broader. We must address the determinants of health and take collaborations and corporation to new heights with partnerships that help PNG deliver on a promise of universal health coverage," she said.

Ms Maalsen encouraged the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) to build an efficient and effective health system with sustainable capacity to deliver high quality services to everyone.

"I think we will all agree that it's unacceptable that the rates of maternal mortality remains so high and immunization coverage so low," she said.

She highlighted three areas of focus in this new way of working which WHO and PNGIMR can partner.

First, the efforts to build mechanisms that works across sector and society to address the determinants of health; the strength and focus on partnerships that produce measurable results at the country level; and concrete steps that needs to be taken to ensure that working together can guarantee safeguard health security.

"IMR's role in continuing to produce locally relevant evidence for Papua New Guineans will bring greater meaning and relevance to our messaging for health," she said.

She also said there will also be a greater need for partnerships in research to support the implementations of agendas such as healthy islands which seeks to combat the rise of non-communicable diseases and the risks that arise from an unhealthy environment.

continued from page 16

However, the Buttrressing Coalition has not officially being part of the ongoing discussions but managed to engage with the Director of the Indo-Pacific centre for health security to speak on behalf of the ideas of the Buttrressing Coalition to get

across what is negative.

"We have also engaged with the Director of the PNGIMR to make sure that the IMR's perspective is central to these discussions," he said.



PNGIMR's capacity has grown

I am a community health worker but have been serving in the Filariasis project in East Sepik since I started work in 1995.

My first 10 years, I was working as a casual labour and later in 2007 I became a full time payroll officer of the Institute.

I am a long serving worker working with the filariasis project and we have finally found the medication for this disease.

I believe the medication called the three-drug therapy is now available after it was approved by the World Health Organization as well as the Department of Health to be used nationwide.

This is my second time to be here in Goroka and I am not sure if I will still be with PNGIMR for the next

ten years or not. Maybe this might be my last time here.

I thank the PNGIMR for recognizing my 23 years of service to this Institute and I am pleased to be here attending the 50 years celebration.

I have seen a lot of changes happening today unlike in the past, there were limited number of scientists and scientific officers but now there are more scientists, doctors, professors and others who have joined to bring the change that is seen today.

The capacity of PNGIMR has truly grown and I am proud of the Institute.

Samson Satofan
CHW, Maprik
1995–

It's a pleasure to be part of this celebration

I've been working as a carpenter with the PNGIMR in Maprik for 23 years now.

Working with such Institute is an honour and I am happy I joined IMR.

To be part of the 50th anniversary of the PNGIMR is a pleasure as we are here to celebrate its birthday and appreciate the good results that have come to pass.

Goroka is one of the best locations to embrace such events like this.

I will still remain with the PNGIMR until and unless the organization decide to let me go.



James Hapatuk
Carpenter, Maprik
1995–

I'm glad to be here in this beautiful place

I am one of the gardeners working with the PNGIMR in Maprik. I have served the IMR for 22 years now; I started work in June, 1996.

From my own observation, PNGIMR has been doing great

in their field of work as well as extending out in terms of having more vehicles, more buildings and labs whilst projects carried out have being successful all throughout.

This is my second time to come to Goroka and I am glad I'm here to

celebrate the 50th anniversary here in this beautiful place.

Andrew Saki
Gardener, Maprik
1996–



I am privileged to be working with PNGIMR

I started work in 2012 with the PNGIMR in Maprik as the Admin driver.

I have never been to Eastern Highlands and this is my first time here. I am fortunate to be here in Goroka to witness the 50th anniversary and also tour the headquarters of PNGIMR.

I can say that Goroka is a beautiful place and is trouble-free, it is a good place to live in, which is why I am happy that I came to celebrate 50 years anniversary of the PNGIMR.

I am privileged to be working with the PNGIMR in Maprik because I feel that PNGIMR has taken good care of me and I'm glad I'm a part of the IMR family.

Kwiambu Salpasim
Admin driver, Maprik
2012–



Coming here is a joyful moment for me

I started work with the PNGIMR in 1990 when IMR went to Wosera for the first time.

I was helping George Koki, Gerard Saleu and John Taime to do household census, collect blood from women and children which was part of George's case study.

In 1992, PNGIMR assembled funds and started another project in Maprik while I was still at Kwingigini health centre doing demographic surveillance for malaria project.

1997, malaria vaccine trial was introduced and one of my child was part of that vaccine trial.

I was sent to Madang to do Microscopic training and I proudly held the title as Medical Lab Assistant in 1997. We completed studies for malaria and then to other small projects which occurred during that time as well in Wosera.

Intermittent Preventative treatment (for prevention of malaria and anaemia) in infancy project commenced in 2008 after malaria vaccine trial was over. I was one

of their microscopist during that project.

Maprik (Dreikikir) is the main centre in filariasis but as for me, I was fortunate to be part and partial of all the projects doing slide readings, collecting blood etc.

When I heard that PNGIMR will be celebrating its 50th anniversary, I got on the plane and flew here on my own expense just to be part of this celebration.

Coming here is a joyful moment for me to acknowledge the work of PNGIMR and me being part of this Institution is a lifetime opportunity.

In good and in bad times while working with IMR, I can boldly say that IMR has never left my side and have supported me and my family greatly. I have not received any formal invitation to attend this event but I had to be part of this celebration and speak highly about this Institute.

Jane Simbrandu
Microscopist, Maprik
1990–2015

LONG SERVING STAFF REWARDED

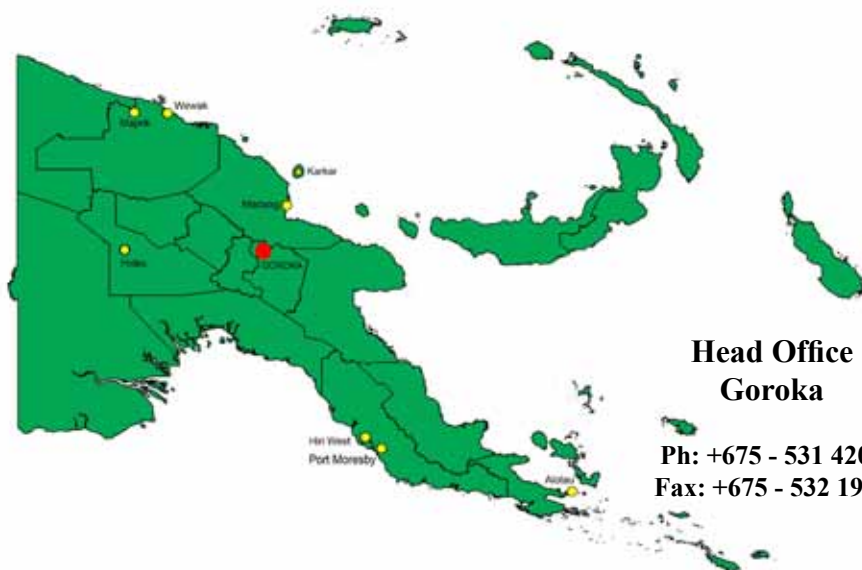


Over fifty staff from the PNG Institute of Medical Research were awarded long service medals during the PNGIMR Fiftieth Anniversary Colloquium.

Staff who served the institute over 10 years continual service were awarded in their respective categories. The award categories included Gold; for staff serving

over 20 years, Silver; for staff serving from 15 to 19 years, and Bronze; for staff serving from 10 to 14 years.

Among the awardees was the newly appointed PNGIMR Director, Dr William Pomat (31 years) in the gold category and Vector borne Unit head, Dr Moses Laman (11 years) in the bronze category.



**Head Office
Goroka**

**Ph: +675 - 531 4200
Fax: +675 - 532 1998**

