



Interplast

# INSIDEINTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

EDITION 2, 2019

## Farmer's hand repaired in life-changing surgery in PNG

**Young or old, our ability to extend the wrist and grasp objects makes a huge difference to our lives. So, when a subsistence farmer presented unable to extend his wrist, grasp or use his thumb, during a recent Interplast program to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, the Interplast team understood the importance of improving his hand and wrist function.**

Originally from Hela province in the highlands but now farming in Six Mile in Port Moresby, Ken estimates that he is "60 Christmases old". He had a bush knife wound in 2018 that resulted in injury to the radial and medial nerves in his right forearm which, as a right-hander, made it "very difficult to work in the farm, pick things up and dig".

The Interplast volunteer team performed tendon transfer surgery on Ken's arm. With the addition of hand therapy by local physiotherapist Rosie, under the tutelage of Interplast volunteer hand therapist Penny McMahon, Ken's thumb is now functional.

With a bright smile, Ken thanked the Interplast team and local staff. "I'm pleased to get my hand moving," he said.

For Rosie, this case was the first time she had created a splint (with Penny's help). Rosie is a first-year physiotherapy resident at Port Moresby General Hospital.

"I wanted to become a health professional after I lost my sister," Rosie said.

Rosie studied physiotherapy at Divine World University in Madang on PNG's north coast. She attended Penny's annual lectures, but this Interplast program was the first time she met Penny and worked with her.

"I found the training very valuable. This Interplast visit helped me a lot, especially with my management of hand patients. I now have more confidence in my techniques in treating this type of case," Rose commented.

"I love being a physio - seeing patients like Ken recover and be able to do activities of daily living again."

The Interplast surgical mentoring program to PNG was supported by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The allied health mentoring program was supported by a private donor and the nurse education program was supported by Rotary Club of Melbourne.



Farmer Ken with Interplast volunteer hand therapist Penny McMahon (right) and physiotherapist Rosie.



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interplast.org.au

## From Yangon to Dandenong: a learning experience

**Swapping the tropical wet season of Yangon, Myanmar for the depths of a Melbourne winter might seem an unusual choice, but it was an unprecedented opportunity for learning for anaesthetist Dr San San Lwin.**

You might think that a visiting specialist from Myanmar would be overwhelmed by the size of an Australian hospital. But not San San, who is head of anaesthetics in the Department of Plastic, Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery at the 2000-bed Yangon General Hospital.

“I’ve enjoyed my time in Melbourne focusing on anaesthetic management and with placements in the plastics theatre,” said San San.

“I’ve learnt a lot from Australia that I can apply in my country. However, we have limited facilities, equipment and staffing,” she said.

“I’ve observed aspects of pre-operative, intra-operative and post-operative care – so anaesthetic management across the spectrum and across a variety of case types.”

Interplast volunteers Associate Professor Michael Leung and Dr Ashit (Ash) Das supported and supervised San San during her six-week placement, which was hosted at Dandenong Hospital in metropolitan Melbourne’s south east. Dandenong Hospital is part of Monash Health – Victoria’s largest health service.

Michael is head of the plastic and reconstructive surgical unit at the hospital and Ash is a senior anaesthetist. They are also both long-standing Interplast volunteers – and Michael is Interplast’s volunteer Country Coordinator for Myanmar. Michael and Ash have both recently delivered an Interplast program in Myanmar – the sixth program there for Ash and Michael’s 14th (he has completed 19 programs for Interplast in total).

Ash commented that they had put together a structured program for San San with a focus on head and neck reconstructive surgery.

“In Myanmar, we found that the post-operative pain management was overseen by the surgeons. That’s a big difference to how it works here, with anaesthetists playing a big role in post-operative pain management,” said Ash.

“It’s really important that post-operative pain is well managed as it can impact the longer-term outcomes.”

For San San, one challenge is to adapt her new knowledge and encourage the hospital administration and surgeons back home that she and her team should be involved in post-operative care.



Dr San San Lwin (centre) with Associate Professor Michael Leung (Left) and Dr Ash Das.



**56%**  
of patients treated who are male



**44%**  
of patients treated who are female



**160**  
volunteer positions



**9**  
planning and evaluation programs



**1786**  
total number of training opportunities



**13**  
surgical programs



## Inspiring visit to Tonga for new volunteers

### **A recent Interplast surgical and allied health mentoring program to Tonga saw two volunteers undertake their first Interplast program.**

Plastic and reconstructive surgeon Mr Andrew Hadj had heard of Interplast while working as a junior doctor.

"I knew of Interplast and the extensive work it carried out in the Asia Pacific region," Andrew said.

"I spent 12 months working at the Alfred Hospital during my training with David Morgan who often spoke of his experiences with Interplast in Tonga. This stayed with me at the forefront of my mind during my training. Once I'd completed training and I returned from my fellowship, I applied to join Interplast and was fortunate enough to undertake a program soon after."

In collaboration with local partners at Vaiola Hospital, Nuku'Alofa, Tonga the surgical team saw 64 patients and performed 41 operations and trained 13 local health professionals.

"The team was ideal in that we all had varied experiences and exposure to health care in the Pacific region. It ranged from myself – who had zero exposure – to someone like David Morgan (surgeon) and anaesthetists Paul Goggin and Sarah Goetz who had undertaken several trips previously to the islands," Andrew said.

"Without doubt, the paediatric cleft lip and palate surgery undertaken by myself and David was immensely gratifying, not only for the little patients but for their parents."

For hand therapist Julia Wild the allied health mentoring program was interesting and challenging.

"As a new volunteer, I found it all very well organised by the Interplast team in Melbourne and the local partner hospital. I really enjoyed it," Julia said.

"The local health professionals said that they really like the Interplast team as we take the time to teach; to build rapport. We are not just in and out and 'taking over'," she said.

Both volunteers commented on the stoic nature of the Tongan patients.

"I learnt that the Tongan people are some of the most resourceful, kind, humble, stoic and beautiful people I have ever come across in my life," Andrew said. "Their philosophy of care and empathy runs

deep in the culture of their health care system - witnessed firsthand by the nursing staff, doctors and allied health staff - notably working within such a resource limited environment. They manage patients' needs exceedingly well for the resources they have at their disposal and are incredibly grateful for the support and education we can provide through programs like these, albeit for seven days."

The Interplast surgical program to Tonga was made possible by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's ANCP, Rotary District 9920 (New Zealand) and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons through the Pacific Islands Program (PIP). The allied health mentoring program was supported by the ANCP.



*Interplast volunteer surgeon Dr Andrew Hadj operating during the Tonga surgical program.*



*Hand therapist Julia Wild and surgeon Andrew Hadj both did their first program with Interplast in Tonga in May 2019. The Interplast team is pictured outside Vaiola Hospital.*

## Sharing knowledge and skills between program visits

**As an organisation focused on training and sustainability of programs, the challenge for Interplast is how to help our local partners advance between program visits.**

Thanks to funding support from Rotary District 9455 in Western Australia, Interplast staff were able to develop and launch a new training resource database.

Interplast CEO Prue Ingram commented that the resource database was an important step.

“By building this resource database, we are ensuring our training is ongoing and sustainable,” Prue said.

“Our training doesn’t stop when the volunteers fly home.”

The Interplast resource database is a new online training portal that can be accessed by any of the health care professionals associated with Interplast’s local partners, anywhere and anytime.

“This means that Interplast has been able to extend our educational and mentoring support beyond the time that our volunteer teams are physically in-country,” Prue said.

“Our expert health care volunteers can also utilise the database to share, via Interplast, vital resources and tools for those who they are supporting overseas.”

Prue explained that, as part of the project, Interplast developed several high-quality, professional education videos which demonstrate important practical skills.

“The videos allow trainees to refresh skills they may have been introduced to by Interplast volunteers during a program. Trainees can also use the videos as a tool to train other health care professionals at their hospital,” she said.

In addition to surgical and allied health videos, Interplast developed a three-part nursing education video focusing on wound management. This video was created with the involvement of long-standing Interplast volunteer nurse Jan Rice, who is a globally renowned wound care expert.

Jan was pleased to be involved with the project as she believes that all professionals have a duty to share their knowledge.

“The videos will be of great assistance to nursing and attending staff in our regional areas as we all learn in different ways and the visual is often easier to recall,” Jan said.

“Seeing how we interact with patients and how we clean up after our dressing procedure will give clinicians an understanding of how to reduce cross infection.”

Feedback has been positive about the online database. A trainee surgeon in Fiji commented: “Thank you Interplast, I will use these resources and share them with my colleagues.”

Interplast hopes to build on these resources as further funding becomes available.



# 28 days

## youngest patient

male, Philippines, burns scar contracture release, hands



# 89 years

## oldest patient

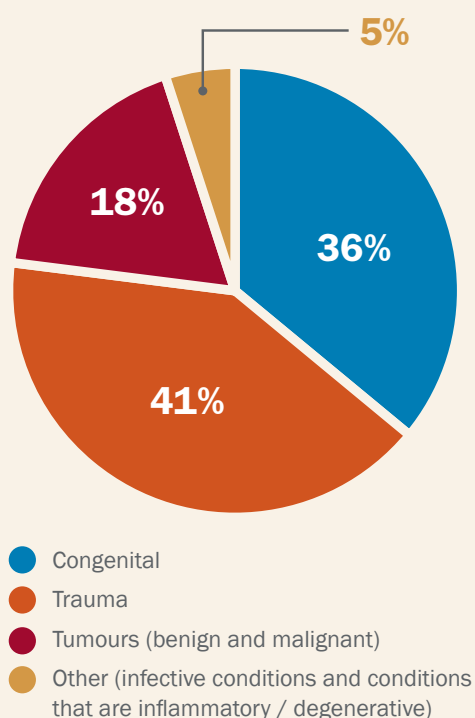
male, Vanuatu, removal of skin cancer



# 17

## number of countries supported

## Classifications of surgery



Interplast Australia and New Zealand is actively supported by Rotarians in Clubs and Districts throughout Australia and New Zealand.



Interplast acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons established Interplast with Rotarians and the Fellows remain active supporters.





## Burns surgery restores hope for Allan

**To be a carpenter requires good use of your arms and hands. So, when 50-year-old carpenter Allan presented to the Interplast surgical team with disabling burns contractures (see definition below) on his forearms, wrists and hands the team knew they could help change his life.**

Allan lives in Abau in Central Province in the south-east of Papua New Guinea. In 2018 he escaped a burning house on his hands and knees and sustained severe burns to both hands. These severe burns were not appropriately treated at the time and contracted. The contractures meant his wrist and hands were disabled and he could do very little for himself. His family had to care for him, with washing and eating a challenge and no prospect of being able to work.

"I am always a worried man," said Allan.

"I am still a young man and I want to care for my family."

Interplast volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgeon Mr Siddharth (Sid) Karanth and the Interplast team, plus the team at Port Moresby General Hospital operated on both of Allan's arms to release his contractures.

"We performed contracture releases on Allan's wrists and fingers followed by skin grafts. His thumb joints were dislocated and were fused, and a K-wire inserted in each hand to keep the fingers in a more acceptable position," Sid said.

A split thickness skin graft is where the wound is closed with a graft which consists of the epidermis (the outer layer of the skin) and a partial thickness of the dermis. The dermis is the thick layer of living tissue below the epidermis which forms the true skin, containing blood capillaries, nerve endings, sweat glands, hair follicles, and other structures.

Kirschner wires or K-wires are sterilised, sharpened, smooth stainless-steel pins. In this case the wires were used in order to stabilise the joints in a favourable position while the grafts heal, and the thumb joints fused.

The Interplast team operated on both arms in the one operation as they knew that it would be a year before they returned to PNG.

Allan was very pleased with the surgery.

"Now I feel like I will be able to use my hands again. Even though I know it will still be hard and they won't work like before, I finally feel some hope for our future."

Allan's wife was also very thankful: "We have been so worried. Thank you for giving our family a second chance."



**"I AM STILL A YOUNG MAN  
AND I WANT TO CARE FOR  
MY FAMILY."**

ALLAN

### What is a burn contracture?

A contracture is a serious and potentially disabling complication of a burn. A burn patient who receives the best of treatment is expected to heal with scarring but without any contractures. However, without appropriate care the burn scars are likely to contract. Contractures occur when the burn scar matures, thickens, and tightens. This can prevent movement and often occurs when a burn is over a joint or close to areas like eyelids or mouth.

*Carpenter Allan's hands were contracted from burns that were not appropriately treated after he was burnt.*



BABY TEVITA IS A HAPPY FOUR-MONTH OLD BABY BOY. INTERPLAST VOLUNTEER SURGEON ANDREW HADJ AND THE TEAM REPAIRED TEVITA'S CLEFT LIP. REPAIRING THE LIP AT THIS EARLY STAGE WILL ASSIST TEVITA TO EAT AS HE STARTS ON SOLID FOOD AND WILL HELP HIS SPEECH AS HE STARTS TO SPEAK.

*Tevita is pictured with Rotary observer Claire Holt.*

## Yes, I want to help people like Tevita get the surgery they need!

### HOW TO DONATE

#### BY MAIL

Complete and return this form in the enclosed reply paid envelope

#### ONLINE

[interplast.org.au/donate-now](http://interplast.org.au/donate-now)

#### CALL US

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### CHOOSE THE AMOUNT YOU WISH TO DONATE

☐ \$70 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500

☐ or my choice of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts over \$2 are tax deductible. An annual receipt will be issued at the end of the financial year.

☐ Please credit Rotary Club: \_\_\_\_\_

### PLEASE FILL IN YOUR PAYMENT DETAILS

☐ Cash ☐ Credit card ☐ Cheque

Card number:

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Expiry \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### MY DETAILS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Suburb \_\_\_\_\_

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ For ID purposes

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