Orthopaedic training proposal for the Pacific Islands

**Background**

In the 1990s Orthopaedic Outreach (the humanitarian arm of the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA)) organised a Diploma program in Orthopaedic Surgery (Pacific). This was based in Fiji. 11 candidates from Fiji and others in Solomon Islands and PNG were trained. This programme was suddenly ceased in 2001 when 2 graduates from Fiji broke their training agreements and came to work with Queensland Health. Because of the breaking of their agreements with the AOA the Pacific diploma was closed. This left other affected candidates in limbo. To date there is still no alternative training program. Of the 11 candidates trained in Fiji only 2 are still working in Fiji.

**Aims:**

This program aims to provide a training route for those doctors wishing to train as an orthopaedic surgeon and serve their communities in the Pacific. An association named the Pacific Islands Orthopaedic association (PIOA) has been established with the support of Orthopaedic Outreach. Orthopaedic Outreach has been involved in providing training in South East Asia and the Pacific for the last 30 years. Orthopaedic Outreach is currently involved with the Indonesian Orthopaedic Association in the provision of experts in Bali, Indonesia.

PIOA has been established in the Solomon Islands because of support from the National Referral Hospital, Honiara and the Ministry of Health, Solomon Islands. The National Referral Hospital has one of the few functioning specialist orthopaedic services in the Pacific Islands. The training program is however open to citizens of all the Pacific Island nations. The association has been accepted as a member of the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association (APOA). The APOA is the umbrella body of orthopaedic associations and comprises members from countries from South Asia through South East Asia and the Pacific. The PIOA is also affiliated with the AOA and will seek affiliation with the RACS and hopes to share some courses such as the Emergency Management of Severe Trauma(EMST), Care of the Critically injured surgical patient (CCrISP), Surgical Primary Exam, Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE), Radiation safety course.

**Accreditation:**

The PIOA training program is currently being assessed by the International College of Surgeons. A decision on this will be reached at the end of April 2012. It is expected that graduates of the PIOA training program will become Fellows of the ICS.

Certification by ICS will confirm that the training programme offered by PIOA meets an internationally accepted benchmark standard for a specialist orthopaedic surgeon.

It does not however imply automatic acceptance by local licensing authorities in any particular jurisdiction. The acceptance of this or any other qualification is the role of the local regulatory authorities (Ministry of Health) in each jurisdiction.

The PIOA is currently negotiating with both University of PNG and Fiji School of Medicine for accreditation of the course to be awarded as a Master of Orthopaedic Surgery.
The Program:

The training program will run over 5 years. The course would be delivered in fifteen live-in modules each lasting two weeks which would be compulsory. That is there would be 3 modules each year held in February, June and October for 5 years. In addition candidates would be provided with web based learning materials related to each module to enable them to prepare prior to coming for the live in module. A detailed curriculum is attached. The live-in modules would be held at the Training Centre, National Referral Hospital, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Courses would be taught initially by surgeons from Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland. Orthopaedic Surgeons with an interest in teaching in the Pacific would be welcome to help. Further clinical supervision would be carried out by visiting RACS Pacific Islands Project and other teams and existing local clinicians. Examinations would be conducted by guest examiners from the AOA. In addition candidates would spend some time (3-6 months) in a post outside their home territory to gain further clinical experience in elective orthopaedics.

The course will be delivered by volunteer surgeons providing their time and experience at no cost to the PIOA. Candidates will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation costs. The course would be based at the National Referral Hospital, Honiara. They have access to an existing excellent training conference room with data projector. It is proposed to purchase training models to assist in the setting up of skills workshops for practical skills based training.

PIOA commitments:

The Pacific Islands Orthopaedic Association (PIOA) will provide a post-graduate training program in Orthopaedic surgery including trauma care. The programme will train medical practitioners in orthopaedic surgery to the standard of a specialist orthopaedic surgeon. Graduates will be awarded a Fellowship of the International College of Surgeons (FICS Orth.).

PIOA, through an agreement with Orthopaedic Outreach (the humanitarian arm of the Australian Orthopaedic Association) will recruit volunteer orthopaedic surgeons from Australia, New Zealand and other nations to assist in the training programme and the running of examinations and assessment.

PIOA, through an agreement with Orthopaedic Outreach (the humanitarian arm of the Australian Orthopaedic Association) will assist with the provision of appropriate surgical equipment and resources that may be available for donation from Australia and New Zealand.

PIOA will assist with co-ordinating the exchange of surgical, nurse and technical educators between the Pacific Islands and Orthopaedic Outreach.

The course will need to be accredited by the Ministry of Health, in each candidates country as a necessary qualification to be recognized as a specialist orthopaedic surgeon.

Post training requirements for the employer of the candidate:

A condition of acceptance into PIOA courses is that the anticipated post-graduation employer of the applicant must provide an assurance in writing that employment will be provided to the graduate, and that this will be to provide orthopaedic care in the public sector, for a period equivalent of the length of training undertaken. This assurance of employment will be conditional on and not negate the graduate meeting all reasonable employment contract requirements.
The anticipated employer must also undertake to assist with the provision of surgical instruments, prostheses and consumables, which will allow the graduate to work to their full potential, both in terms of their time and their training. PIOA will be able to assist with advice on sources for locating cost effective implants.

In addition the employer should commit to providing the following:

- Description and guidelines for role, and duties
- Recognition of training: including job title and salary scale
- Quality assurance systems (e.g., monitoring systems, audit) to ensure the graduate provides high-quality orthopaedic care (PIOA can assist with this)
- Provision of supportive supervision (PIOA supervision visits available on request)
- Provision of opportunities for continuing education (attendance at PIOA scientific meetings and other regional meetings, such as Australian Orthopaedic Association and Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association)

**Entry criteria.**

Registered medical practitioner (minimum MBBS from University of the South Pacific or University of Papua New Guinea or equivalent)

- 2 years experience in surgery after internship
- Fulfil requirements - application form, references from 2 surgeons, satisfactory interview
- Written agreement from candidates home country Ministry of Health recognizing their training as a specialist in orthopaedic surgery.

**Co-operate with:**

- Royal Australian College of Surgeons - primary exam, OSCE, EMST, CCIRSP, Assistance with curriculum
- Australian Orthopaedic Association.- Assistance with curriculum
- Assistance with forming Pacific Island Orthopaedic Association
- Assistance with exams
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Assistance with orthopaedic in training exam (OITE)
- Orthopaedic Outreach - Assistance with mentoring trainees
- Assistance with providing examiners / supervisors

Ministry of Health SOLOMON ISLANDS

- Accreditation of Orthopaedic Fellowship as being a valid post graduate specialist qualification in orthopaedics in the Solomon Islands and extended to other Pacific Islands.

**Course co-ordinators:**

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