



**The Pacific Islands Orthopaedic Association (PIOA)  
2023 Academic Year Trainee Report.**

**Introduction**

Greetings from the trainees from across the Islands of the Pacific Ocean. This journey embarked on in making a difference for our folks across the islands has certainly brought on its challenges. 2023 was not different but it was worthy a year to be celebrated for many reasons.

The Pacific Island Orthopaedic Association (PIOA) continues to be a blessing for us in serving as an avenue for the acquisition of much needed quality knowledge, skill sets and professionalism. Since the beginning of its journey in 2013, we are super grateful on our boost in trainee membership from across our vast oceans and islands of the Pacific. The trainees are from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands and most recently Palau (2024).

Since COVID 19, the virtual platform has been certainly rewarding with zoom sessions that were covered on a weekly basis. These were both the regular zooms, as lead up to physical attendance in the classroom and ward sessions, and; also, the examination preparation sessions for the finalists.

**The Academic Year 2023 / 2024.**

**a) New Trainees 2023**

Congratulations and welcome to our 2023 new trainees:

- I. Tommy Walters – PNG
- II. Pauliasi Bauleka – Fiji

**b) New Trainees 2024**

- I. Jeffrey Yiapi – Solomon Island
- II. Oralae Pitakia – Solomon Island
- III. Riobert Fa'ataga – Samoa
- IV. Tzun Rafael – Palau
- V. Manoa Valeniyasana – Fiji
- VI. Paul Lomavatu - Fiji
- VII. Penijamini Naiceru - Fiji

**c) Apia, Samoa Module - 13<sup>th</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023**

The year commenced with the pre-module virtual meetings on the Zoom platform every Sundays. The topics for the Samoa module were as follows:

- Paediatric Orthopaedic
- Tumour, Infection and Inflammation
- Professional topics

We would like to firstly thank our God for his blessings upon us. We are forever thankful to the leadership of PIOA and the faculty members for their faithfulness in sharing their expertise and time in planning, coordinating and executing learning for us in 2023.

A special thank you to the families of our faculty members for your support through sharing your loved ones in teaching and mentoring us.

We would like to also extend our thank you to the leadership of Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital for their acceptance and support towards hosting our module. Thank you to the staff as well, both clinical and support, for all their support.

Thank you to the patients and their families for allowing us to learn from them. Without our patients there is no clinical learning.

Fa'afetai.

**d) Suva, Fiji Module – 11<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

The Suva module also started with the pre-module zoom sessions. It was once again super great to have some sensitization with the lead up sessions. The module covered the following topics:

- Knee
- Foot and ankle

Thank you to all faculty members who supported in delivering a successful module in Suva. Special thank you to the leadership, staff, patient and their families for allowing us to have the Module at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital, Suva.

Vinaka vaka levu!

**e) PIOA Exit Exams 2023 – finalists.**

One of our highlights in 2023 was the exit exam for three of our PIOA finalist. Drs. Naseri Aitaoto (American Samoa), Clay Siosi (Solomon Islands) and Raymond Saulep (PNG). Congratulations Drs Aitaoto and Siosi for passing the exit exams! We are super proud of you both! Saulep will reattempt the exam this year and hopefully make it through.

The passing of Drs. Aitaoto and Siosi makes now a total of 9 trainees who have sat the exams and passed. It is a work in progress. It is our hope that the islands will one day be saturated with PIOA trainees that will be able to provide safe and quality orthopaedic care to our island folks.

To the examiners, we cannot thank you enough. Appreciate always your time and expertise in supporting to conduct examinations for us:

- I. John North,
- II. Richard Lander,
- III. David Bartle, and;
- IV. Areta Samuelu and Pita Sovanivalu (observers).

**Supervisory Visits.**

Thank you to Martin Walliser and Philip Stillhard, Switzerland faculty members, who continue to provide much needed supervisory visits to the trainees. 2023 saw yet another successful visit to our colleague trainees in Timor.

**Zoom Sessions.**

The Zoom platform has continued to provide an essential avenue in 2023 for virtual meetings through which valuable learning has and will continue to take place.

Network connectivity across the islands has been an ongoing issue. A challenge we are hopeful that each island country can resolve over time thus enabling uninterrupted connectivity. Trainees are encouraged though to have connectivity to more than one network at any one time. However, the provisions of session recordings have been always been an amazing back up resource for catch up learning.

**Conclusion.**

It certainly has been a journey worth celebrating for us all. We are already experiencing changes with care we are delivering to our folks. The results bring hope and encouragement to us. Challenges are just a way of life. It is the effort in continuing to search for ways for perfection that brings joy to one. We pray and hope that all efforts will one day leave a Godly legacy for all to embrace and celebrate.

2024 has already brought forward an increase in the trainee enrolment. It is our believe that this journey will certainly bring the desired results to our island folk. God Bless.

Prepared by:

Raymond Saulep – Trainee Representative.