

## Orthopaedic Outreach Team Latouka June 2010

Vinaka Vaka Levu Vunivai ( Thank you so much Doctor) were the words that resonated through the wards , the clinic and the hotel during our 1 week visit to Latouka Hospital.

Having worked and trained in the developing world I thought I had a fair idea what to expect at Latouka. But what lay ahead of me was an eye opener and a harsh reminder of the challenges this small Island nation faces.

I was very excited to learn that I had been accepted as a part of the Outreach team for the trip to Loutouka in June 2010. Charged with enthusiasm , curiosity and 16 cases of gear Dr Peter Brazel, Dr Micheal MAuliffe, John Dash and Ben Francis and I landed in Nadi as a part of the 1 week Outreach orthopaedic team.

A busy hospital located amidst the cane framing region of Latouka the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in Fiji on the western coast of Viti Levu. Sharp at 8 am we headed to the orthopaedic ward where I came across Isoa a young 23 year old rugby player who sustained an open fracture of his tibia which since had ended up in an infected non union with a draining sinus. Laying next to him was Malakai a 28 year old who fell off his horse and landed on a piece of wood which pierced his spine leaving him with a dural tear with a sinus draining csf and neurologic deficit of his limbs. Over the next 2 hours we moved from bed to bed seeing patients with cauda equina , chronic osteomyelitis , c spine injuries, numerous patients with fractures , young Justin young 12 year old with his nth fracture of his Rt femur because of underlying osteogenesis imperfect. To the diabetic ward filled with patients with diabetic foot sepsis. I suddenly got a reality check for what lay ahead in the week.

The clinic in the afternoon was a busy affair consulting patients with meniscal tears to fibrosarcoma, malunions, innumerable cases of osteomyelitis .B y the end of the day I was ready for a stiff drink and good rest gearing up for the week that lay ahead. This was just the beginning..



In the theatres we were welcomed with open arms with Illy ( head scrub nurse) and her team . A small group of anesthetists and nurses who worked very hard through the week to kept the cases ticking. Met Freddie and his team of jovial wardies who have spent their whole lives at this hospital .I

remember Bula (scout Nurse) sleeping in the corner of the theatre at 6 pm because she only got 3 hrs of sleep whilst on call last night but never did she complain.

The more we worked with the staff the more I began to comprehend the gravity of the situation. The constant flow of patients, Pita and Waheed (the registrars) who had been doing 1 in 2 on call day after day for a while. To the Trauma board which had 13 cases and no theatre time, to the resource stricken theatre and hospital.

We all rolled our sleeves up and began to help out where ever we could. Operating long hours. Whilst John and Ben patiently took the staff and Nurses through all the ortho sets that lay in the OR complex, whilst organising the sets. Dr Brazel and Mc Auliffe spear headed the major spring clean of all the implant cupboards while tag teaming with the operating.

We mingled with the local hospital staff during our teaching sessions and shared our experiences. I was really happy to catch up with some of the students of Fiji school of Medicine and see their dedication and motivation to improve the quality of care and services in Fiji.

As the week drew to an end I realised what I had just happened.

Amidst all the work, the challenges, Fijian Kakaoda, pawpaws, and Masala dosas we found ourselves smiling constantly and happy. Fiji managed to cast its magical spell over us. I had always wondered why this small Island nation had the happiest and most content people I had seen anywhere in the world..I think I got my answer.

I would like to thank Illy for showing me how with minimal resources an efficient theatre can be run. Example set by Pita and Waheed hard working registrars that despite our frustrations and limitations we can always endeavour to go bit further. I thank the staff of Latouka hospital who with their questions as to how within their resources still had the will to improve health care delivery.

I would like to thank Dr Mc Auliffe for his motivation and leadership in his endeavour to help the people of Latouka, Dr Brazel for his humor and in spearheading the trip. Thanks to John and Ben for all the Smith and Nephew gear they brought along and slogging on (thanks to Codral flu tablets).

Thank you to Orthopaedic Out reach and Stryker for giving me this opportunity to be a part of this team to Latouka hopefully the beginning of a long relationship ahead.