



TONGA NEWS : HEALTH

Australian doctors help Tongan clubfoot babies

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Nuku'alofa, Tonga:



The orthopaedic team with some of their patients at Vaiola Hospital

SEVENTEEN Tongan babies born with the clubfoot condition will be able to walk normally after undergoing successful surgery in Tonga performed by a team of orthopaedic surgeons from the Sydney Children's Hospital in Australia.

Dr Andrew Leicester said today that Tonga has the highest incidence of clubfoot in the world with one in 100 babies born with the condition.

The visiting team, including four orthopaedic surgeons, Dr Leicester, Dr Leonard Kuo, Dr Con Gleszos, and Dr Paul Jarman, with Dr Hugh Seaton as the anaesthetist and Kerry Amy as the physio, arrived in Nuku'alofa on Thursday October 19.

They performed three days of corrective surgery on 25-club feet of the 17 babies, some of the babies had only one foot operated on and some had both feet corrected. The babies were aged from three months old to over one year old.

Clubfoot is a congenital condition in which one or both feet are turned at the wrong angle at the ankle, and surgery is used to correct the defect to enable the person to walk normally.

He also confirmed that all surgeries performed over the weekend were successful and they were very happy to have

performed it at the new surgical theatre at the new Vaiola Hospital wing at Tofoa.

The orthopaedic visit has been an annual trip carried out by Australian Orthopaedic surgeons for over 20 years now. The trip is independent of the Pacific Islands Project and is mainly concerned with the management of clubfoot.

The group returned to Sydney today, after bidding their last farewells with the babies and their happy parents who showed their appreciation by giving the team various Tongan gifts.

Dr Leicester said that the team would return to Tonga around the same time next year.



Dr Andrew Leicester (right) at Vaiola Hospital