



A new model of clinical placement in the Solomon Islands

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Background: Makira Island in the Solomon Islands has a population of over 41,000 people, which in 2013 was serviced by one doctor, who worked in the hospital and travelled to remote sites, supported by highly skilled nursing staff. The capital Kira Kira is a very impoverished community with no formal governance structure, poor infrastructure and a large variety of public health issues that lead to fascinating medicine.

During 2013 Bond University on the Gold Coast in Australia piloted final year undergraduate medical student placements at Kira Kira Hospital, with 33 students participating. By the end of 2014 over 50 final year medical students will have undertaken a placement at Kirakira Hospital. It is now a university wide experience with students from other faculties including 12 students from the Physiotherapy, Public Health Nutrition, Sustainable Development, Film and Television and Project Management who work together to support the local community.

Methodology: The placement was evaluated over both years using electronic surveys, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with staff, students and community members.

Results: The evaluation found that this was an extremely valuable, personally safe, clinically fascinating, and professionally life changing student experience, which was greatly appreciated by, and contributes to, the local Kira Kira community. The greatest strength of the program was the peer mentoring and supervisor model—whereby four students worked in pairs supported by nurses, the doctor and local community. The main challenges were the supervision arrangements and available resources.

Conclusion: Placements in developing countries can be career highlights for all students. This paper will present the findings from the evaluation and the innovative peer supervision model that was developed in a third world country that others could learn from.