

Summer/Autumn 2023 Vol. 43

**What we achieved in
November 2022:**

142

**consultations
(identifying 100 cleft
patients)**

49

**cleft operations
(in five days)**

2

**patients identified for
treatment in Adelaide
(sponsored by ROMAC)**

2

**within how many days
almost all cases were
discharged post-op**

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The OSSAA Plastic and Reconstructive surgical team was the first to travel to Dili, Timor-Leste since the Covid-19 hiatus began three years ago. In fact, it was almost three years exactly since the last visit and our return would not have been possible without the well-organised pre-visit planning by our long-term local counterparts at Guido Valadares National Hospital (HNGV), the base of what was our 49th volunteer surgical mission in Timor-Leste.



Dr Todd Maddock, centre right, teaching a local anaesthetist how to insert an endotracheal tube in a difficult airway case.

Essential to the large patient turnout was pre-planning by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' in-country coordinator Mr Sarmiento Correia, our counterpart cleft and burn surgeon Dr Joao Ximenes, our local theatre nurse colleague Mr Cornelio Mok Freitas, and the medical and administrative executive of HNGV. Covid presented one of our biggest challenges in the 20 years that we've performed cleft surgery in Timor-Leste, because while we have spent most of that time training local staff to become more able to treat their fellow citizens, a huge backlog of cases has emerged, which our returning team has hit the ground running trying to reduce. It will take time to manage and return to where we were in 2019, when we achieved reductions in the average age of cleft repairs, built some speech and orthodontic treatment capacity and improved on-the-ground management of cleft patients – the beginnings of a bonafide Timor-Leste staffed cleft team with the skills and self-determination to one day no longer need us.

OSSAA thanks Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, the 36th Governor of South Australia, for her attendance and support at last year's annual luncheon.

undertaking humanitarian surgery overseas in

TIMOR-LESTE & INDONESIA

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope you enjoyed the holiday period, found some time to rest and recover and have had a productive return from break.

It was very exciting for OSSAA to return to Dili after three years, travelling there in November as the first visiting surgical team in Timor-Leste since before Covid-19 began. Our return – the 49th team mission to Timor-Leste since OSSAA's formation in 2000 – was very warmly welcomed.

On a personal note, I felt very privileged to be a member of that team. It was wonderful to reconnect with our friends and colleagues and it was a very busy and successful visit, with 142 consultations and 49 patients receiving surgery. Team trip reports are posted on the OSSAA website so please have a look if you would like to know more about our on-the-ground activities.

Due to our three year absence, there is a significant waiting list for surgery. As a result, the committee has agreed to make two trips to Dili this year. The first team, led by Dr Mark Moore, has just left for Timor-Leste as of the time of writing, with a second trip planned for later in the year.

In 2022, OSSAA awarded the inaugural John Hargrave scholarship to Mok Freitas, an emerging nurse leader who has a long-standing relationship with OSSAA. I had the great pleasure of being able to present this scholarship in person to him during our last trip. It provided Mok with the funds to complete his Bachelor's degree. At his graduation ceremony, he gave thanks to the faculty on behalf of his student group. As an emerging leader, Mok has now committed to undertaking a Master's degree and we wish him every success in this long-term plan.



Mok Freitas at his graduation ceremony



We are grateful for your ongoing support and your generous donations that enable OSSAA to remain financially equipped to continue sending teams and much needed supplies to Timor-Leste.

At our AGM on 13 October 2022, the committee – which includes Dr Mark Moore, Stephen Baker, Donna Fitzgerald, Patrick Markwick-Smith, Connie Granozio, Dr Andrew Wallace, Vanessa Dittmar, Mary Martinaitis and Dr Zameer Gill – was re-elected.

Plans are underway for our main fundraising events, namely the annual luncheon and film afternoon. The focus for 2023 is to increase and diversify membership to broaden OSSAA's support base and so strengthen the team visits and delivery of needed supplies. Please share our fundraising events with friends.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

Joy Booth – OSSAA President

CONTACT

Website: ossaainc.org.au
Email: admin@ossaainc.org.au
Post: PO Box 138, UNLEY SA 5061
ABN: 24 682 034 669

Secretary/Admin Officer:
Donna Fitzgerald
Tel: 0417 314 010
Email: dfossaa@adam.com.au

