



The University of Fiji

The University of Fiji enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with General Practitioners in the Western Division for Observation Mentorship of final year Medical Students.

The University is partnering with a group of GPs in the western division to provide mentoring and observation opportunities for its 6th year (final) medical students of the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine & Health Science.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Shaista Shameem said she was grateful to the GPs who stepped in to ensure that the final year MBBS students remained interested and active in their chosen profession of medicine while the divisional hospitals remained closed to them due to the pandemic. Normally 6th year medical students would be based in hospitals as the final part of their training.

Professor Shameem said that while the students were unable to assist in community medicine or the Ministry of Health clerical work as other medical students were able to do since they were based in Suva, a more useful strategy from the University's point of view was to ensure that the UPSM students could achieve progress in their studies while the hospitals were closed to them for the clinical component of their learning.

The Mentoring and Observation Programme with GPs served to continue their education and keep the students occupied and engaged while they were waiting for the hospitals to re-open to them. They are learning how a medical clinic works in all respects and this will provide them with an edge in medical knowledge for their internships in 2022, Professor Shameem said.

Dr. Diva Singh, one of the GPs involved and coordinator of the Programme which is supported by the Fiji College of General Practitioners, stated that the GPs aimed to train medical students to understand the role of GPs in the community's primary health care needs outside of hospital settings. Hospitals have been the standard practice for training of medical students decades.

“The students are learning the unique and important differences of GPs as against Hospital doctors in particular the GOPD settings. They'll get a good knowledge of the definition and characteristics of General Practice (GP)/Family Medicine (FM) which is an Academic Discipline of its own. Through this experience the students will think of pursuing a career in GP/FM and

we can expose them to undertake courses in GP/FM that are available through distance education from various universities,” he said.

Professor Shameem said the experience will also assist the students to understand how telemedicine is practiced which is the futuristic medical training for the Age of the Pandemic.

Students who were coached by eminent GP and President of the Fiji College of General Practitioners, Dr. Ram Raju at his Nadi clinic stated that the students would learn all manner of practical GP work and were tutored in research as well as to write proper case notes.

The representative of year 6 UPSM students, Patrick Lal said the University of Fiji’s initiative was a great one as they felt they were making a contribution to community health through the kind assistance in mentoring by eminent and experienced GPs, as well as learning from these practitioners about the actual practice of GP medicine at the same time.

“We observed patients for the ANC clinic, family planning and also took a patient up to Nadi hospital as referral for admission which was quite unexpected but great,” one of the students said.

Students at Dr. Ahmed Shakil Sharif’s clinic stated that the doctors in the clinic assisted them in every manner possible, including lecturing them on all aspects of GP work in between seeing their patients.

“We learnt about murmurs, neurological issues, detecting abducens nerve palsy and also were taught the general patient approach and had SLIs given and presented which was then discussed.”

Students in Dr. Shaireen Prasad’s clinic said she taught them to improve their case history-taking capacities and to streamline questions and examinations based on frequent presenting symptoms.

“She also provided a conducive environment to plan, read and discuss what we had observed and learnt. We discussed common outpatient management strategies for certain diseases as well as for elicit physical examinations.”

Students at Dr. Diva Singh's clinic stated that they were given the opportunity to offer plans for management prior to discussions about patient care and medical issues.

“In the morning we observed the Dr Singh examining a total of 12 patients. Dr Singh was also teaching us as we went along and we had a good experience.”

The students at Dr. Bayani Dragon's clinic stated that they observed his examination of patients and noted down case histories, which he later discussed with them.

“He gave us tips on physical examinations and prescription writing while we observed his examination and treatment of his patients.”

The University of Fiji will continue with the mentoring programme with the GPs in the future as a way of getting its students into the community medicine option after the mandatory training at public hospitals.