

Pei HAA Annual Scientific Meeting

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Melbourne Convention Centre



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Coming from a small pacific island nation, I cannot help but be in awe by the whole affair that is the HAA Annual Scientific Meeting. It has been an excellent opportunity to network with other health professionals, to experience new technology, to learn new ideas and to simply be inspired!

My first exposure to HAA was in 2011, as part of the Pacific Transfusion Leadership Program (PTLP) that was hosted by the Australian Red Cross and funded by the AusAID. This program enabled 10 participants from 9 pacific island countries to share their experiences from their respective transfusion services, learn from each other's challenges and successes and together build a Pacific Transfusion Network (PTN) to continue collaborations and provide assistance for each other. The PTLP concluded with attending the HAA 2011 in Sydney, which proved to be an amazing and inspiring experience for all ten participants.

One of the most interesting topics of this conference for me was the presentation by Dr Adonis (Dr Emma Castro was unable to attend) on the European Experience on Pathogen Inactivation (PI). This goes to show the momentous leaps transfusion science is taking to provide better, safe and quality blood products. I know Samoa is many many years from PI, but if this was to be implemented in country, it would alleviate a lot of our current problems: namely the occasional shortage of reagents for screening blood units, the lack of confirmatory tests for Hepatitis B and C, Rapid Particle Reagin (RPR) reactive tests, the lack of antibody testing and the lack of trained staff to name a few.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity provided by the ANZSBT to attend this conference. I also had the privilege of being invited to attend a special dinner hosted by CSL in honor of Dr Emma Castro, where we were very fortunate to listen to the presentation on PI again.

The whole experience was incredible, and it inspires new and better ideas and provokes a need to better the services in my home laboratory; seeing the products in the main room, reading the posters and listening to the presentations by the various health professionals. But most of all, I got to wear my first ever fascinator to the Conference dinner, which proved to be the nearest thing to experiencing the Melbourne Cup Festival! One of the most entertaining parts of the dinner was seeing the "serious" professionals let loose on the dance floor.

One other success of the event for me was catching up with my new friends from the Blood Safe/Blood Matters Program and eLearning from the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. They are currently looking at having the eLearning materials made more readily available to us (the pacific), considering the limited access to computers and internet. We are very excited about this, as currently there is no way of assessing the current staff's (Nurses, doctors, laboratory) knowledge of blood transfusion, and it is ideal (and already recommended to the newly revived Hospital Transfusion Committee) that everyone involved at any level of blood transfusion to undertake the eLearning modules.

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude again to the ANZSBT, for the opportunity granted to attend the Annual HAA Scientific Meeting. I recommend to all local health professionals working within Blood Transfusion and Hematology to attend this conference, to broaden their networks and challenge them to lift the current standards of Blood Transfusion in Samoa.