

Hearts4Kids Mission, Suva Fiji 2015



More than a month has passed since the Hearts4Kids team returned from the 2015 mission to Suva, Fiji and we are delighted to hear from the local doctors that all of the children who were operated on are doing really well.

Fifteen children with congenital heart disease had life saving surgery in September under the care of surgeon Kirsten Finucane and a team of 30 doctors, nurses and technicians.

The team operated over five very long days on children ranging from 5 months to 13 years of age.

Success can be measured clinically by the post-operative checks and echocardiograms but the Hearts4Kids 2015 real markers for success were the happy faces of the children and the hugs from grateful parents. These parents knew that this may have been their child's only hope of living a normal life to adulthood and were so thankful.

Each child has a story. Here are a few to share with you.

Taito is a 6 year old boy whose parents described as being able to walk only 4-5 steps before having to sit down with exhaustion. His blue lips and nails soon turned a lovely pink after his surgery. His parents could not take their eyes off him. By the time Taito had recovered from his surgery he was up playing football on the ward with the nursing team and Dr. Wright! Something his parents never dreamed he would do. On our last day in Suva, Taito's grandparents arrived after travelling 6 hours by bus from Nadi. When they first saw Taito he was sitting down playing with other children. When he saw his grandparents his face lit up, he jumped up and ran towards them. They could not believe their eyes and both started crying with joy at the difference in their little grandson - a sight that warmed all of our hearts.



Jeremiah cheering up Taito with bubbles.



Sweet Samuela enjoying the cuddles and the toys donated by Greenlane preschool

Samuela is a 10 month old baby boy with Down's syndrome who had worsening heart failure due to a hole in his heart (a VSD). A well know baby to the children's' ward nurses and doctors, he had spent most of his short life in hospital with recurrent chest infections. Samuela recovered incredibly well after his operation. His mother and the local nurses were delighted with his new energy for life. We were delighted with the baby and mum with matching huge grins!

Caring for hearts of the Pacific

Jeremiah wants to be a pilot, but with his heart defect he was struggling to grow normally and too breathless to play. Jeremaiah's story has been captured on film, and the teaser video is up on the gallery section of the hearts4kids.org.nz web site, with more to come.

One additional baby was identified as requiring prolonged post-operative care but was well enough to fly to Auckland. Luisiana age 2months was funded by Rotary- ROMAC to be escorted back by Kirsten and John and has been successfully operated on in Auckland.

Our Fijian colleagues and friends.

Both the PICU and ward team worked alongside local Fijian nurses each shift. This was an extremely valuable experience for both teams. Coming from a nursing environment that is well staffed and medical supplies plentiful it was quite the adjustment. Back home, the model of care is 5-6 patients to one nurse, whereas in Fiji on our last day there was 50 children to 2 Fijian nurses, showing their hardworking attitude and the dedication to their job.



Fijian and H4K staff working together



Jeremiah recovering from surgery. A card on the shelf shows a superman with a sternotomy – drawn by a Kiwi heartkid

We soon built a good relationship with the local nurses and doctors, giving formal and informal nursing and medical education sessions. We developed a cardiac education booklet to help with the care of cardiac kids in the future. We left with many new friends.

This mission could not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the team but also would not be possible without your support. Every single person and company who so kindly donated to our trust, helped save the lives of these children of Fiji.

A big heart filled thank you from the Hearts4Kids team and vinaka from the children and their families in Fiji.

We have already met as a large team and then as trustees to begin planning next year's mission..... we will keep you posted!



Smiles all round nearing the end of the 2015 project



The theatre team at work