

## 125 Years Celebration

### MEDICAL NEWS

#### GRADUATION CEREMONY 1975

Dr Maraj, Mrs Maraj, Hon. Minister of Health, Graduates, ladies and gentlemen.

To you Sir, and to Mrs Maraj I offer our gratitude for honouring us with your presence this afternoon particularly as we know the tremendous weight of commitments that must fall on you both at this time of the year. Also, to all members of the audience here today we are extremely grateful, for the School is honoured by their support of our ceremony. On behalf of the School and the Ministry of Health I extend to you all our most hearty welcome.

This is the eighty-seventh graduation ceremony. Initially the graduation ceremony used to be held in the Legislative Council Chambers; later at the Assembly Hall of the Fiji School of Medicine. Increased number of students and graduates have meant that our Assembly Hall across the road is too small for graduation and we thank Dr Murphy, Medical Superintendent, Tamavua Hospital for offering us the use of this hall.

The first graduates received their certificates in 1888. Circumstances which led to the establishment of the School are unique and those concerned with its development to its present stature must be given due credit. In 1878, only 3 years after the devastating flue epidemic and with impending danger of outbreak of smallpox and other introduced diseases, Dr McGregor (later Sir William McGregor) conceived the novel idea of training vaccinators. The first of such graduates were known as Native Practitioners, received a total salary of seven pounds ten shillings annually.

The idea of creating Native Medical Practitioners conceived by Dr. McGregor was put into effect by Dr. Corney. Later Dr S.M. Lambert of the Rockefeller Foundation was the brain behind the creation of a Central Medical School in 1928. This enabled other governments in the region to send their students for medical training in Fiji.

It is interesting to note that we still have a wide territorial scope, perhaps wider than - University of the South Pacific. Applications to enter most of the School's various courses continue to increase year to year from Fiji and overseas. For instance, for the 15 places in Assistant Health Inspector Course and 9 places in Medical Laboratory Technology course, over thousand applications were received this year. Most of these were from Vanua Levu. Increased number of applicants from Vanua Levu necessitated the Selection Panel to take annual trips to Labasa to interview them there. Although the School does get some outstanding students in the Medical Course, there is no great competition as compared to other countries for Medical seats. One gathers at interviews that the brighter school leavers prefer to do medical course overseas or B.Sc course at the U.S.P. This trend may change in view of changes made in the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act to enable FSM Graduates to practise privately after six years service to the Government.

We introduced successfully two new courses this year: The Medical Assistant course and Pharmacy course. A three year Dental Therapy course was also commenced. To date 13 courses are being run at the School.

In 1976 Junior Dental Assistant course would be introduced. Ours is a multidisciplinary institution, perhaps, one of the few of its kind in the world. Often people at home and abroad have wondered why this institution being one of the oldest medical institutions in the third world, still awards a diploma and not a degree. The answer to this, ladies and gentlemen is not very simple. We have continued to raise our standards, at the same time very mindful of the aims and objectives of the School.

The Academic Board has been deliberating seriously during the year on upgrading the present medical course and has made some useful recommendations on its implications in terms of staffing, facilities and duration of training.

Increased number of courses and strengthening of certain weaker areas, this year meant addition of some new full time staff members.

Dr A. Cruz Adiao from the Phillipines took appointment as a Tutor in Paediatrics. This post is being provided by the World Health Organisation. Another WHO donation to this Institution is Dr. H.P. Patel who has been appointed co-ordinator of Medical Assistant training programme. We are certain that with his extensive experience in the training of Medical Auxiliaries in Nigeria, Dr Patel would contribute immensely to this new training programme which we have already begun.

Much awaited Senior Surgical Tutor Dr. Ken G Barrand finally arrived late last month. The post of Senior Surgical Tutor remained unfilled for approximately eighteen months. The School is greatly indebted to Dr S.P. Ghose for carrying out, besides his routine duties as a senior surgical registrar, the duties of the Senior Tutor for nearly a year.

At his juncture I would also like to record my appreciation to the services rendered by Dr. Chaudhary in teaching Pharmacology and therapeutics to third year Medical Students, besides performing his normal duties as Senior Medical Registrar at the C.W.M. Hospital.

Anatomy teaching at the School has been greatly strengthened this year with the arrival on the staff of Dr Upendra Kumar Shrivastava. It was indeed gratifying to note the external examiner's 'glowing' remarks on the high standard of Anatomy teaching.

Shortage of Health Inspectors in Fiji adversely affected the staffing of the Hygiene Department. The post of Health Instructor remained vacant throughout the year. The burden fell on the shoulders of the Senior Instructor, Mr Chandrika Prasad to teach two classes viz: the Assistant Health Inspectors and the Health Inspectors. Consequently we were unable to provide consultancy services to other institutions as he had done in the past. The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics continued to provide consultancy services to various institutions and ministries in Fiji. Manual of Infant feeding has been revised by this department.

With WHO assistance some staff were able to attend International workshops and seminars this year. The Principal attended a workshop on Action Planning in Sydney. Dr Yadh Ram Sadhu, Senior Tutor in Social and Preventive Medicine participated in a workshop on the Teaching of Community Medicine in Manila. He is currently attending a course on Evaluation at the Regional Teacher Training Centre of the University of New South Wales.

Mr Chandrika Prasad, Senior Health Instructor attended a workshop in general Medical Education held in Sydney early this year. In June next year with WHO assistance, members of staff from the School of Medicine and School of Nursing are organising a National workshop on General Medical Education for Health Personnel in Fiji.

There will be more buildings for the School in the CWM Hospital compound. Bilateral extensions to the Hoodless House in Brown Street are underway. The Donation from the Pan Surgical Association is a block consisting of 28 rooms for students, visiting Professors' flat and a library. It is hoped that by early next year, this wing will be ready for occupation. We have decided that our clinical students will be the first occupants. They have worked patiently all these years in a caged bachelor's quarters.

The New Zealand Lepers Trust's donation of an Amphi-theatre is expected to be operational by late 1976. This Amphi-theatre will have a seating capacity of 120. F.S.M. has also spread its tentacles to the Western Division. As from 1976 final year medical students and the second year medical assistants will receive training in Lautoka. The old Lautoka Hospital has been converted into student room.

The New Zealand Red Cross donation of Library books and journals will be discontinued as from 1976. Over 4 years their grant totalled over \$20,000.

The British Book donation has been a life saver. The British Government has recently donated \$2,000 worth of books. It is hoped that the British Government would continue this much needed assistance in future years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, 1975 has been a challenging year for the School with its usual problems and those added by introduction of new courses. The co-operation and assistance received from the Ministry of Health throughout the year is much appreciated. We are grateful for continued assistance from the University of the South Pacific, various government Ministries and other internal organisations.

Now I would like to turn to the Graduants. My congratulations for your successful completion of your respective courses. In your hands and in the hands of those who follow you lies the major responsibility of maintaining the health services. In the name of this School which has placed you on the first step towards learning your job, I charge you to carry on this good work. You are about to become Unit in the Medical and Dental services of Fiji and other Pacific countries. To Medical and Dental graduants I would say that you have 3 loyalties;

*(Source: National Archives of Fiji)*

**OBITUARY -  
(FSM Graduate 1964)**



**Dr. Faleniu ASAUA**

**September 9, 1938 – February 4, 2006**

**With no-one to turn to, except GOD**

*Brought up on a one square kilometer land mass (Apolima Island), the odds were against a young boy full of hopes and dreams, whose father's sudden death rendered his family penniless. In order to feed his family and put his siblings through school, Faleniu became a plantation labourer.*

*Later on, as an Agricultural Department clerk, his "palagi" boss, Mr. Gunliff, recommended him for a scholarship to study medicine at the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM). However, upon discovery of the fact that Faleniu did not sit the secondary school examinations required for university entrance, FSM readied him for expulsion. His former boss intervened, and by the hand of God, Faleniu continued on to graduate as the Best All Round Graduate, also receiving a gold medal in Preventive Medicine.*

*Despite his interest in Internal Medicine, he accepted a scholarship to specialize in Pathology, during which he completed the five-year course in only four, at Otago University (NZ). Working with professors at the Auckland Medical School (New Zealand) while working as a Pathology Registrar provided him with invaluable experience.*

*He became the first Samoan born and bred consultant pathologist, heading the Samoa National Health, Central Laboratory and Pathological Department for more than two decades altogether.*

*During his lifetime, he worked as Director of Community Services for the University of the South Pacific (Suva, Laucala Campus) and ironically as an external examiner and lecturer for FSM. He also published works on cancer and endometrial hyperplasia.*

*Outside the medical field, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa of Aai o Niue was where he served as a A"oa"o fesoasoani (lay preacher) and Chairman until his passing away.*

*Surviving him are 6 grandchildren and 5 children: two medical doctors, an electrical engineer, an accountant and an entrepreneur – eleven lives moulded and shaped by their father's determination and faith in God.*

*Dr Faleniu Asaua*

*Samoan Medical Journal. Retrieved from*

*<http://www.oceaniamed.org/smj/V002I0012010/14.%20Obituary%20Dr%20Faleniu%20Asaua.pdf>*

*on 2nd Feb. 2011*