

Being a good neighbour

Mr Malcom Baxter, FRACS

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TO THE EDITOR: I commend the sentiments expressed by Lieutenant Commander Beran in his letter in the September 2003 issue of *ADF Health*.¹

Might I point out, however, that the scheme of assistance to our neighbours that he envisages already exists, albeit in the civilian sphere rather than the military. Since 1996, the Pacific Island Project, funded by AusAID but administered by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, has sent teams of specialists to 10 of our island neighbours.

Surgical teams have usually comprised a surgeon, anaesthetist and scrub nurse, but non-surgeons have also been sent (eg, diabetes specialists).

The College also administers the Tertiary Health Program to Papua New Guinea and the East Timor Project, both with similar charters. Our members usually make two-week visits for consultation and treatment and are strictly volunteers, although travel and accommodation expenses are paid by AusAID. Beran's comments about the necessity of providing an educative service to local doctors is one that these projects wholeheartedly support. Transferring skills to doctors, nurses and paramedical staff is a central tenet of these programs.

The ADF may wish to set up a similar program, but I would suggest that, rather than reinventing the wheel, it might be more effective to join the existing effort. Multiple programs can cause problems with such things as scheduling of operating theatres and allocation of local resources.

I suspect that several readers of *ADF Health* have already taken part in one of these programs and I commend all who are interested in doing so. Details can be obtained from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.²

1. Beran RG. Being a good neighbour [letter]. *ADF Health* 2003; 4: 96.

2. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. What we do. International projects. Available at: www.racs.edu.au/wedo/ (accessed Mar 2004).

Aspects of forensic responses to the Bali bombing

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TO THE EDITOR: The recent article in *ADF Health* on forensic aspects of the Bali bombing investigation¹ omitted an acknowledgement of the ADF forensic dental team which worked in Bali. I apologise for this oversight. The members were:

Colonel Geoffrey Stacey RAADC

Lieutenant Commander Matthew Blenkin RAN

Squadron Leader Alex Forrest

Squadron Leader Alain Middleton

Without their efforts, the identification of many victims of the bombing would have been impossible.

1. Griffiths C, Hilton J, Lain R. Aspects of forensic responses to the Bali bombings. *ADF Health* 2003; 4: 50-55. □