

**Migration Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

MRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: FJI35380
Country: Fiji
Date: 10 September 2009

Keywords: – Fiji – Dialysis facilities and treatment

Questions

- 1. Please provide information on the availability of dialysis facilities in Fiji.**
- 2. Please provide information on any barriers to accessing these facilities such as cost factors or waiting lists.**
- 3. Please provide information on the quality of these facilities.**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide information on the availability of dialysis facilities in Fiji.**
- 2. Please provide information on any barriers to accessing these facilities such as cost factors or waiting lists.**

An article on the Fiji Government website dated 27 May 2008 describes the opening of Fiji's first Dialysis Centre in Suva in March 2008, established by the Kidney Foundation of Fiji and assisted by donations from both Fiji's Interim Government and foreign donors such as the Indian Government. President of the Kidney Foundation, Dewan Maharaj, claims that the centre "will be able to dialyse about 14 people a day at the very reasonable price of \$225 per treatment":

The opening of Fiji's first kidney dialysis centre has certainly brought a huge sigh of relief for the public especially for those who suffer from chronic kidney disease and their financially stricken families. For many years these unfortunate citizens have been suffering in silence. Their efforts to set up a dialysis centre, which was largely spearheaded by the Kidney Foundation of Fiji, were to little avail. Instead they were forced to spend huge amounts of money travelling abroad for medical treatment. Those who could not afford all the associated costs of travelling were sadly left to literally wither on the quite. However, these people now have the Interim Government and the Government of India to thank not only for recognising their plight, but especially, for taking real action.

The Kidney Foundation of Fiji was set up by concerned family members, friends and supporters of the many patients who suffer from kidney disease. Over the years, the Foundation sought support from donor agencies including in particular previous Governments. They tried hard to reason that the cost of sending patients abroad were so overwhelming prohibitive that some people had no choice but to wait until death calls at their doorstep. Precious lives were lost and even for those who were able to travel abroad, many had to return to a life of paying off debts. It was a miserable situation.

One of the main reasons previous Governments were reluctant to support the setting up of a dialysis centre was costs. Firstly, there was the initial cost of setting up the centre and equipping it with both machines and appropriately trained personnel. Secondly, renal machines are said to be among the most expensive of all medical machines. But perhaps the greatest prohibiting cost is the maintenance cost.

Despite these seemingly limiting factors, the Kidney Foundation of Fiji and its supporters worked tirelessly to establish a unit in the country. To them, life was much more precious than the dollar value. In the course of their struggles, they have experienced a rising number of deaths from kidney failure.

Enter the Interim Government

In only a few months since taking on the governance of the country's affairs, the Interim Administration showed its commitment to attending to drastically needy areas. A fresh request from the Kidney Foundation was accepted without hesitation and this resulted in the donation of F\$25,000 to assist in the setting up of the first dialysis centre.

Prime Minister Commodore Ratu Voreqe Bainimarama says he was deeply concerned for sometime about people dying from kidney disease.

"My Government wishes to ensure the Kidney Foundation that it will support all initiatives that will allow people with kidney disease to live longer," the Prime Minister said.

While demonstrating its commitment, Government simultaneously called on potential donors to lend a helping hand.

The Government of India was the first of a few other donors to come forward with a donation of \$US100,000. In addition to this, the Government of India said it will also assist with the purchase of machines, medicine, equipment and personnel including a Nephrologist, technicians and nurses under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) programme. India's contribution was made known by its High Commissioner, Professor Jha during the opening of the dialysis centre in March.

...President of the Kidney Foundation Dewan Maharaj says the Foundation is very grateful to both the Interim Government and the Government of India for their support.

"We are deeply thankful to the Interim Prime Minister, Commodore Ratu Voreqe Bainimarama and the Minister for Health for pushing this initiative. We are also greatly indebted to the Government of India and especially the Indian high Commissioner," Mr Maharaj said.

He said the dialysis centre will be able to dialyse about 14 people a day at the very reasonable price of \$225 per treatment. The centre will also be open to tourists and other visitors to the country as there are reportedly thousands of people who suffer from kidney disease and who need dialysis treatment.

Mr Maharaj said the Foundation has also received indications of further financial assistance from the Interim Government which could see the further reduction of treatment costs.

"Our ultimate plan is to see the centre fully operational. And one of our goals is to create greater awareness on how people can protect themselves from kidney disease," he said (Chandra, A. M. 2008, 'New Dialysis Centre to Save Lives', Fiji Government website, 27 May http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_11943.shtml – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

An interview on ABC Radio Australia on 14 August 2009 describes Fiji's Dialysis Centre which has been operating since March 2008 and has attracted many foreign patients. Although "[t]he centre has eight machines and sees around eight patients a day", it is argued that half of these patients are foreigners, and many locals are unable to afford the \$200 per dialysis fee. Head doctor at Fiji's Dialysis Centre, Fimione Voceduadua, advises that "for the uninsured locals who can't afford dialysis treatment, there is nothing that can be done". In addition, Dr Voceduadua claims that there is a waiting list for treatment:

Many people in the South Pacific suffer disproportionate levels of diabetes and high blood pressure... and that also puts them at increased risk of kidney disease. If they suffer kidney failure, they need dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive. Fiji's Dialysis Centre is only a year old but it has already saved the lives of many Fijians. But locals aren't the only people benefiting from the centre; holiday-makers and ex-pats are also taking advantage of the service.

Presenter: Kate McPherson

Speaker: Dr Fimione Voceduadua, senior doctor at Fiji's Dialysis Centre; Dewan Maharaj, President of the Kidney Foundation of Fiji

MCPHERSON: There are several types of dialysis, all of which involves removing waste products and excess fluid from the blood. A person with kidney failure needs dialysis almost every day to stay alive.

Until last year, many Fijians with kidney disease living abroad could not visit their family and friends back home, because Fiji did not have a dialysis machine, that has now changed. Head doctor at Fiji's Dialysis Centre, Fimione Voceduadua.

VOCEDUADUA: Some of them they come to visit relatives, which they don't usually do initially before, but when the centre now is available, now they are able to come across, because they are able to have dialysis, then they go back. There is one gentleman from Australia who comes across, he was working in Nadi, so he comes across to two sessions and he goes back. Some just come when there is a death in the family. They said they are quite happy to see that the centre has been available for them.

MCPHERSON: The centre has eight machines and sees around eight patients a day. Dr Fimione says he has seen more than 50 patients with end-stage kidney disease. But half of them are not local. They come from the United States, Canada and Australia, and he says he's got a waiting list.

VOCEDUADUA: There is one from New Zealand, they will be coming in August, there is one from Canada coming in October, some are on a holiday, some already from Fiji to see their relatives and go back.

MCPHERSON: Dr Fimione rejects suggestions that foreigners are taking advantage of Fiji's comparatively cheaper dialysis treatment.

VOCEDUADUA: I don't think it's the case. If it was like that, I would have noticed it. They will be here for quite sometime and I would have sensed that they are taking advantage. I don't think they really take advantage of it, no.

MCPHERSON: The President of Fiji's Kidney Foundation, Dewan Maharaj, has also welcomed expats and holidaymakers coming to Fiji for treatment and he says the number is likely to rise.

MAHARAJ: We are non-profit making organisation, so we try to keep it as cheap as we could. The cheapest in Australia is about \$400 to \$500 I think and that's Australian dollars, and we in Fiji, we charging them \$200 per dialysis. Many of them there wanted to come for a break to Fiji. They can do so if they are on dialysis.

MCPHERSON: While wealthy foreigners and expat Fijians can access dialysis, Dewan Maharaj admits the prices being charged are beyond many locals.

MAHARAJ: It's difficult, let me tell you, it's expensive. A country like Fiji, we are developing world. The people who normally have this dialysis problem, some in the urban areas, they can't afford to pay. We are trying to collect some funds here and there. We try to assist them as much as we can.

MCPHERSON: Dr Fimione says for the uninsured locals who can't afford dialysis treatment, there is nothing that can be done.

VOCEDUADUA: Most of our patients once they have been diagnosed, they are just being treated for diabetes and hypertension which we have seen seems to be the most causes of or the two main causes of end-stage kidney disease. There is nothing being done for them.

MCPHERSON: Dr Fimione says he hopes to see the cost of dialysis treatment go down, and more centres opened.

VOCEDUADUA: We all anticipate the cost to go down more and for more help to be given to the centre, so that we can start up other centres in the whole of Fiji so that is available and affordable cost to our local population ('Fiji dialysis centre catering to foreign kidney patients' 2009, *ABC Radio Australia*, 14 August <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200908/s2655694.htm> – Accessed 4 September – Attachment 2).

In addition, an article in the Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation's newsletter for April-June 2008 explains that "[f]or dialysis treatment, patients pay \$225.00 a session and for most patients three sessions are recommended every week". The Kidney Foundation's honorary secretary, Ms. Resina Koroi, states in the article that "even though it is significantly less than what it would cost for a patient to access this treatment overseas, the treatment is still considered to be expensive in Fiji":

Since its establishment in 2004, the Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation has continued to make its mark, leading the way in providing assistance to worthy causes that impact the lives of our people.

The Foundation's grant of \$140,000 towards the Kidney Foundation of Fiji is one example of the Foundation's role; paving the way toward, and building confidence in, the establishment of Fiji's first Kidney Dialysis Centre.

As the first local entity to make a financial commitment to the Kidney Dialysis Centre, the Foundation helped create the momentum which led to others in the corporate sector coming forward and pledging support behind what was considered a mammoth project.

In March, all these efforts and contributions were recognised when the Centre officially opened its doors with the help of one of its first patients, renowned journalist and social commentator, Mr. Stan Ritova.

Speaking to Jeevan as he received dialysis, Mr. Ritova was in a jovial mood; greeting old friends who were present at the Official Opening with jokes.

“This is such a blessing for kidney patients in Fiji,” he said. “Sickness is a great leveler and this disease affects men and women, adults and children, rich and poor. So many people have had to leave behind their families while they receive treatment in India for example and this centre will at least ensure that patients are close to their support system, their families and friends. Many others have not been so fortunate and passed away before this centre opened.”

Kidney Foundation’s honorary secretary, Ms. Resina Koroi said the Vodafone ATH Foundation’s grant contributed to the purchase of nine haemodialysis machines which patients use before and after kidney transplants and a site rite machine which is used to scan veins.

The centre was opened by the Indian High Commissioner to Fiji, Professor Prabhakar Jha on the 13th of March at the CWM Hospital and is the second such centre in the Pacific after Samoa.

For dialysis treatment, patients pay \$225.00 a session and for most patients three sessions are recommended every week to help them cope with life everyday. A session can last up to four hours and is enough to keep their kidneys functioning until their next treatment. The dialysis is a lifelong procedure until the patient receives a kidney transplant that allows their body to function normally.

Ms. Koroi said that even though it is significantly less than what it would cost for a patient to access this treatment overseas, the treatment is still considered to be expensive in Fiji.

The dialysis centre has two qualified dialysis technicians from India to set up the centre, operate the machines and train local staff on the use and maintenance of these expensive life saving equipment (‘Vodafone ATH Foundation – Leading the Way’ 2008, *Jeevan*, Issue 5, April-June, p. 1 <http://www2.vodafone.com.fj/resources/uploads/embeds/file/issue5.pdf> - Accessed 9 September 2009 - Attachment 3).

An earlier edition of the same newsletter indicates that prior to the opening of the Dialysis Centre, “[k]idney patients in Fiji [could] only receive peritoneal dialysis which involves the changing of a bag attached to the patient three times a day but which restricts the patient’s movements” (‘Kidney Dialysis Clinic to open doors in January’ 2008, *Jeevan*, Issue 4, January-March, p. 4 <http://www2.vodafone.com.fj/resources/uploads/embeds/file/issue4.pdf> - Accessed 9 September 2009 - Attachment 4).

A student medical journal article from February 2001 also indicates that during this time, peritoneal dialysis was offered in Fiji, although possibly out of reach for many patients due to cost:

Another common and tragic problem was chronic renal failure, often a complication of diabetes. Haemodialysis and renal transplants are not available in Fiji and can be obtained only at great cost overseas. For the majority of patients who are unable to afford either these or the peritoneal dialysis offered in Fiji, the prognosis is poor. Overall, the basic healthcare facilities are good, but specialist treatment is normally available only to people with appropriate financial means (Kuruvatti, J. and Price, H. 2001, ‘Life: Planning your elective—Fiji’, *Student BMJ*, Vol. 9, February, p. 26 <http://archive.student.bmj.com/search/pdf/01/02/life.pdf> - Accessed 9 September 2009 - Attachment 5).

In addition, the Daily Hansard of the Parliament of Fiji from 23 November 2001 quotes Dr G. Gounder, who advised that “[p]eople with kidney problems are left to die, because the fluid that we use for peritoneal dialysis is very expensive”:

The Ministry has a limited budget and these people are left to die, Sir. The hemodialysis machines which were functional some years ago, for many years now, they are non-functional and collecting dust in some corner. They need to be brought into service once again (Parliament of Fiji 2001, 'Parliamentary Debates: House of Representatives Daily Hansard', Parliament of Fiji Islands website, 23 November <http://www.parliament.gov.fj/hansard/viewhansard.aspx?hansardID=317&viewtype=full> – Accessed 9 September 2009 – Attachment 6).

An article in the *Fiji Times* dated 27 June 2009 cites a bio-medical engineer with Fiji's Kidney Foundation, Nehal Kapadia, as stating that "[i]n Fiji, not a lot of people can afford the dialysis treatment, and it's even expensive to have a transplant" ('Bio-engineer joins Hibiscus race' 2009, *Fiji Times*, 27 June <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=124377> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 7).

Similarly, an article dated 6 March 2009 highlights the difficulties faced by local dialysis patients in meeting treatment costs, and states that renal transplant surgery is still currently unavailable in Fiji:

A 39-year-old father of three from Labasa, diagnosed with kidney failure, needs \$40,000 for a kidney transplant in India.

Davendra Kumar Singh was forced to move to Narere in Nasinu to have dialysis treatment three times a week.

The former supermarket sales representative has since struggled to meet the \$750-a-week cost for treatment at the Kidney Foundation.

He has been undergoing treatment since last year and has used up all his savings as well as cash given by business houses, relatives and friends.

He found that both his kidneys were failing in August last year when he was diagnosed by doctors in Labasa. Doctor Simione Vocedua, who is based at the Kidney Foundation, confirmed to the *Fiji Times* the diagnosis Mr Singh was given. He said Mr Singh needs a transplant if he was to recover but renal transplant surgery is unavailable in Fiji at present.

Mr Singh said he needs to raise \$40,000 for the treatment in India.

"I would love to get treated so I could have time with my three children who're in primary school and my wife, so I'm banking on the generosity of the public to help me get a transplant," Mr Singh said (Ratubalavu, U. 2009, 'Kidney patient seeks help', *Fiji Times*, 6 March – Attachment 8).

An article on the Fiji Government website dated 10 August 2009 quotes Mr Dewan Maharaj, President of the Kidney Foundation for Fiji, who claims that "the [Dialysis] Centre now needs a bigger space to accommodate the increasing demand for dialysis treatment", including large demand from foreign patients:

The Kidney Dialysis Centre in Fiji officially opened in 2008 by the Prime Minister of Fiji Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama is now attracting kidney patients from as far as Canada and London and the demand for the dialysis treatment is increasing day by day.

This was confirmed by President of the Kidney Foundation for Fiji (KFOF) Mr Dewan Maharaj who said tourists now prefer Fiji as their visit destination not only because of the natural surroundings but because the Dialysis Centre here provides them with better services at a reasonable costs.

“Everyday the demand is increasing, we are getting quite a lot of tourists who are coming to Fiji especially those who are the dialysis dependent people in Canada, America, New Zealand and even from London. These are Fiji residents who have migrated however upon hearing about the dialysis facilities available they return for treatment,” Mr Maharaj said.

He said the Centre has also provided Dialysis treatment to patients from the Pacific Islands and these patients prefer Fiji rather than other foreign countries because of the reasonable prices offered here for the treatment.

“Now every one time if you walk in our centre there is somebody from overseas having dialysis and we have opened up our services to the Pacific Islanders. We have Tuvaluan people those who were getting dialysis in New Zealand they were paying huge amount of money but now we provide same kind of services in Fiji to them,” Mr Maharaj said.

However, he said the Centre now needs a bigger space to accommodate the increasing demand for dialysis treatment.

“Now we are short of the space the wards are running short now and we have to run services in the weekends as well. I only hope that I need a bit of assistance from the Ministry of Health to give us a bit bigger space so we can cater for the 12 bed dialysis.

For instance Samoa has about 100,000 population and they have a 15 bed dialysis and they running full time.”

Mr Maharaj said the Centre has also started training local nurses and doctors to minimise the costs and also empower the labour needed to accommodate the increasing demand.

“Within this year the number of foreign patients will increase and we have started to train our own nurses and by the end of this year or mid June next year we will have developed our own local nurses and we looking at having our own doctors now,” he added (‘Dialysis Centre attracts foreign patients’ 2009, Fiji Government website, 10 August http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_15641.shtml – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 9).

Similar information regarding foreign patients seeking treatment at Fiji’s Dialysis Centre was reported by the *Fiji Times* on 12 August 2009. The article claims that the Centre to date has 21 patients, however lacks fulltime nephrologists:

FIJI’S dialysis centre for kidney patients is attracting a lot of former Fiji residents and tourists with kidney problems because it is cheaper.

It has been revealed that former Fiji residents living in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, England and parts of Europe were seeking treatment at the centre.

“These are former Fiji residents who could not return to Fiji because there was no dialysis centre here but now they can come back because there is a centre here,” Mr Maharaj said.

“And of course there are tourists who found out about the centre through the media and other means so they come to the centre to be dialysed while on holiday here,” he said.

Opportunities are also open to neighbouring Pacific Island countries.

Kidney Foundation of Fiji president Dewan Maharaj said local and overseas demand for treatment continued to increase because of reasonable costs and the service provided.

There is a difference of about \$500 in the cost of the same treatment abroad.

With two Canadian patients when it started in March last year, the centre to date has 21 patients.

“Last month, we had two from the States and one from Adelaide (among other patients) who were dialysed at the centre because they found it reasonable compared to what they pay back home.”

Yesterday, the centre diagnosed 12 Fiji residents, and six Tuvaluans who are former Auckland citizens.

However, Mr Maharaj said the only problem was fulltime nephrologists.

“We are talking to the Ministry of Health about it. As it is, we have only Dr Jo Malani who comes and diagnose patients when he is available” (Vula, T. 2009, ‘Dialysis centre draws patients’, *Fiji Times*, 12 August <http://www.fijitimes.com.fj/story.aspx?id=127203> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 10).

An article in the *Fiji Times* dated 9 August 2009 describes a \$14,000 donation made to the Kidney Foundation of Fiji by the Finance Ministry to assist “the development of the foundation”:

THE Kidney Foundation of Fiji received a \$14,000 boost from the Finance Ministry. Foundation president Dewan Maharaj said the donation would assist their fundraising drive and the development of the foundation. Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama opened the foundation last year with a \$25,000 to assist in the setting up the dialysis centre (‘Briefs’ 2009, *Fiji Times*, 9 August <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=127019> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 11).

In addition, an article in the *Fiji Times* on 1 August 2008 claims that following receipt of a donated car, the Kidney Foundation were able to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in providing dialysis treatment services. However, concerns remained over how to provide sufficient accommodation for patients at the centre:

THE Kidney Foundation of Fiji is now able to deliver faster and effective service.

This follows the donation of a car for foundation work.

Foundation president Dewan Maharaj said they were in need of a vehicle since day one of their operations.

“I was using my own vehicle for the runs that were needed,” he said.

Mr Maharaj said patients were often transported by staff who used their personal vehicles.

“The new vehicle will also be used to carry items from our bulk in Belo Street to the dialysis centre,” he said.

He said the foundation would be able to save funds with the vehicle.

The car was donated by local Toyota dealer, Asco Motors.

Mr Maharaj however said [sic], the foundation was more concerned about how to accommodate for its incoming patients at the dialysis centre.

The centre he said attended to about 10 dialysis patients a day.

Mr Maharaj said past efforts to setup a centre were hindered by costs constraints.

“If every family in Fiji gives at least \$20 in a year, then we will be in a good position to help the kidney patients,” he said (‘Car firm boosts kidney project’ 2008, *Fiji Times*, 1 August <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=96684> – Accessed 7 September 2009 – Attachment 12).

The proposed establishment of a second dialysis treatment centre planned by the Ministry of Health was outlined in a March 2008 article:

THE Ministry of Health plans to set up a dialysis centre outside the capital to cater for kidney patients who live far from it.

This follows the setting up of a dialysis centre at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital by the Kidney Foundation of Fiji.

The centre will allow patients to undergo dialysis in Fiji instead of raising and paying thousands of dollars to pay for travelling overseas for treatment.

Interim Prime Minister Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama said he would do everything possible to help the centre continue to function and possibly expand its services to the West and to the North in Vanua Levu.

Commodore Bainimarama commended the Kidney Foundation for its effort, saying it would save a lot of lives.

“I fully support the work done by the Kidney Foundation of Fiji and the kidney dialysis centre which has just brought in new dialysis machines for kidney patients,” he said.

“I have also visited the centre twice and am very grateful for the wonderful work done so that kidney patients in Fiji can benefit from the new dialysis machines.”

The interim PM made the comment in a letter to the International Kidney Foundation.

Commodore Bainimarama congratulated the foundation for launching the international campaign to increase awareness on the importance of kidneys to our lives and to make people realise that kidney diseases are common and harmful but can be treated.

He said Fiji’s main challenge was a general ignorance of kidney and kidney diseases and the lack of health facilities for the treatment of kidney patients which result in more than 200 deaths every year from kidney-related diseases.

Commodore Bainimarama donated last year to the Kidney Foundation of Fiji to help set up the first dialysis centre in the country.

Previously, families of patients had to look for money for treatment in New Zealand (Lalakato, A. 2008, 'Plan for another dialysis centre', *Fiji Times*, 15 March <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?ref=archive&id=83910> – Accessed 7 September 2009 – Attachment 13).

In addition, the April-June 2008 Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation newsletter cited above claims that “[p]lans are also in place to open up dialysis centres in Lautoka and Labasa to make these services available to those in the rural areas and those who cannot travel regularly to Suva” (‘Vodafone ATH Foundation – Leading the Way’ 2008, *Jeevan*, Issue 5, April-June, p. 1 <http://www2.vodafone.com.fj/resources/uploads/embeds/file/issue5.pdf> - Accessed 9 September 2009 – Attachment 3).

Although no evidence of existing rural dialysis centres was found in more recent sources, an article on health care reform for 2009 quotes Fiji’s Minister of Health, Neil Sharma, who explains that “[r]egional Diabetic/Renal centers will become operational by the third quarter of 2009” (Sharma, N. 2009, ‘Healthcare Reform – 2009’, Fiji Ministry of Health website, 11 August <http://www.health.gov.fj/Articles/august09/august0911.html> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 14).

A statement from the Permanent Secretary of Fiji’s Ministry of Health in 2008 claims that although health services are provided “at either free or at very minimal costs to the public...funding for health remains an ongoing challenge in Fiji”. However, the introduction of renal dialysis treatment facilities is noted as a positive development in health care:

Health and Social services in Fiji are accessed and obtained at either free or at very minimal costs to the public, at the point of delivery. As been mainly a government public health service, funding for health remains an ongoing challenge in Fiji. On an average, Fiji spends around 2.8% of GDP and 9% of whole of government budget on health care and service. Whilst the magnitude of the allocations appears small when compared to other developing countries, it is worth noting that Fiji has a favorable health status outcomes and indicators with good success in its public health programmes.

For clinical services, the recent development in this area worth noting include the introduction of renal dialysis services in partnership with a Non Government Organization, the Kidney Foundation of Fiji. Furthermore, the ongoing development in the area of cardiac catheterisation laboratory is new and will definitely improve our care for cardiac patient in 2009 and beyond. Nevertheless our dependence on overseas referral of complicated clinical cases will continue and be offered to the population. Overseas referral accounts for around 0.56% of the total budget of the Ministry (Waqatakirewa, L. 2008, ‘Statement of Permanent Secretary’, Fiji Ministry of Health website <http://www.health.gov.fj/Minister/minAdd2008.html> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 15).

In addition, an article dated 20 December 2008 indicates that the Fiji Government plans to implement measures to improve health services more generally, based on a report by the National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF):

YESTERDAY the people of Fiji were informed, via a press release authorised by the interim Prime Minister’s Office, that the President Ratu Josefa Iloilo had given the go-ahead for implementation of the People’s Charter.

In the statement, it was said that the President “conveyed his full concurrence” with what was handed to him in the Report of the National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF).

The report had set out details on the preparation, adoption and implementation of the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress.

We were told in the press release that "His Excellency studied the Report which was formally presented to him on Monday 15th December 2008".

We were also told that he asked the interim regime to start implementing the NCBBF recommendations.

But what exactly has the President agreed to set in motion?

The Report that the President has granted blanket approval to sets out several measures that will be implemented under 11 separate pillars of the NCBBF's People's Charter.

... **Pillar 10:**

- * Increasing health financing to 7 percent of GDP within the next 10 years
- * Other options for financing such a social health insurance
- * Establishing a Health Policy Commission
- * Centralising health decision making and decentralising service delivery
- * Increasing private sector health service delivery (Foster, S. 2008, 'What Iloilo approved', *Fiji Times*, 20 December <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=109386> – Accessed 25 August 2009 – Attachment 16).

3. Please provide information on the quality of these facilities.

A number of sources claim that the dialysis machines available at Fiji's Dialysis Centre were purchased from developed countries at a high cost, which may indicate that they are of a high standard. In addition, many sources as outlined above claim that the Dialysis Centre has attracted a high number of foreign patients, due to the provision of a similar standard of treatment to that available in their home countries.

For example, an article in the *Fiji Times* on 9 March 2008 explains that the seven dialysis machines the centre had recently purchased were "the latest model" from Germany. In addition, "technicians from India would teach locals how to maintain them":

Doctor Joji Malani of the Kidney Foundation unit said the seven [dialysis] machines bought recently meant patients could now be treated locally after a lapse of many years.

He said each dialysis plant cost \$27,000 and was the latest model.

...Centre chairman Dewan Maharaj said the plants cost more than \$500,000 to maintain and he applaud the efforts of his staff and donors who helped buy the new machines from Germany.

Mr Maharaj said the dialysis plants were the outcome of a six-and-a-half-year project to build the Kidney Foundation.

He said it was costly to maintain the plants and technicians from India would teach locals how to maintain them ('Dialysis machines will prolong lives' 2008, *Fiji Times*, 9 March <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=83410> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 17).

An article dated 13 March 2008 cites Kidney Foundation of Fiji President Dewan Chand Maharaj, who claims that “the centre will provide international-standard services” and that “a similar treatment is being given in Australia and New Zealand”:

The Kidney Foundation of Fiji will officially open its dialysis centre at the CWM Hospital this morning.

Foundation President Dewan Chand Maharaj says this centre will now give a hope to kidney patients to live their full life.

It's estimated that between 200 and 400 people die annually from kidney failure. Maharaj says the centre will provide international-standard services for which fees will be charged.

“It's not cheap, let me tell you. It's Fiji standard. It's going to be expensive but a similar treatment is being given in Australia and New Zealand.

“You look at \$800 per dialysis and roughly about 60-70 people of our Fiji nationals between NZ and Australia is having dialysis.

“They couldn't come back to Fiji. This centre will cater for those who are living abroad and on dialysis and it's a lot cheaper than what they pay there,” he said ('Fiji's own dialysis center' 2008, *Fiji Broadcasting Corporation*, 13 March <http://www.radiofiji.com.fj/print.php?id=9358> – Accessed 7 September 2009 – Attachment 18).

An article from the Fiji Government website dated 10 August 2009 as cited earlier claims that tourists are visiting Fiji's Dialysis Centre for treatment as it “provides them with better services at a reasonable costs”. In addition, Pacific Islander dialysis patients are travelling to Fiji for treatment rather than to other foreign countries, including New Zealand, as a similar service is provided at a lower cost:

President of the Kidney Foundation for Fiji (KFOF) Mr Dewan Maharaj who said tourists now prefer Fiji as their visit destination not only because of the natural surroundings but because the Dialysis Centre here provides them with better services at a reasonable costs.

... He said the Centre has also provided Dialysis treatment to patients from the Pacific Islands and these patients prefer Fiji rather than other foreign countries because of the reasonable prices offered here for the treatment.

“Now every one time if you walk in our centre there is somebody from overseas having dialysis and we have opened up our services to the Pacific Islanders. We have Tuvaluan people those who were getting dialysis in New Zealand they were paying huge amount of money but now we provide same kind of services in Fiji to them,” Mr Maharaj said ('Dialysis Centre attracts foreign patients' 2009, Fiji Government website, 10 August http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_15641.shtml – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 9).

An article on the Fiji Government website dated 27 May 2008 as outlined above describes the donations provided to the Dialysis Centre by the Government of India, who, along with providing funds, have claimed that they will “assist with the purchase of machines, medicine, equipment and personnel including a Nephrologist, technicians and nurses”:

The Government of India was the first of a few other donors to come forward with a donation of \$US100,000. In addition to this, the Government of India said it will also assist with the purchase of machines, medicine, equipment and personnel including a Nephrologist, technicians and nurses under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) programme. India’s contribution was made known by its High Commissioner, Professor Jha during the opening of the dialysis centre in March (Chandra, A. M. 2008, ‘New Dialysis Centre to Save Lives’, Fiji Government website, 27 May http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_11943.shtml – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

In addition, an article dated 13 March 2008 which describes the opening of the Dialysis Centre claims that the Kidney Foundation of Fiji had “purchased more than \$900,000 worth of dialysis machines from the United States”:

Kidney patients in Fiji have been given a new lease of life when the country’s first ever Dialysis Centre was opened today.

In opening the centre at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, India’s High Commissioner Professor Prabhakar Jha said the Indian Government has donated more than \$100,000 to the Kidney Foundation of Fiji for the initiative and hopes to provide more assistance in future.

“I’m proud to say that India is committed not only in providing assistance to the foundation but also providing them with a doctor,” he said.

The foundation has purchased more than \$900,000 worth of dialysis machines from the United States which is expected to help the growing number of kidney patients in the country.

KFF president Dewan Maharaj said that a lot of people in the past have died because they could not afford to pay for dialysis treatment overseas.

“It’s very expensive for someone to be treated overseas and most of the sufferers have lost hope while waiting to die.”

“With this centre I am proud to say that people can now be treated here instead of travelling overseas.”

Veteran Fiji journalist Stan Ritova, who has been living in Sydney for some time as a result of his kidney condition, was one of the first to receive treatment from the new machines today (‘Fiji gets its first dialysis centre’ 2008, FijiLive website, 13 March http://www.fijilive.com/news_new/index.php/news/show_news/2760 – Accessed 7 September 2009 – Attachment 19).

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International News & Politics

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Region Specific Links

Fiji Times <http://www.fijitimes.com/>

FijiLive <http://www.fijilive.com/>

Fiji Broadcasting Corporation <http://www.radiofiji.com.fj/>

Pacific Islands Report <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/>

Topic Specific Links

Healthcare Fiji Association <http://www.healthcarefiji.org/>

Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

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