



Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

**Foundation for Surgery**

# 2024 Gratitude Report

# Letter from the Chair

To our donors

On the behalf of the RACS Foundation for Surgery, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for your support throughout 2024.

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of our donors and their support, the Foundation for Surgery has been able to continue to fund activities allowing access to surgical care, by those who need it in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Indo-Pacific Region; in education and training; and through scholarships and grants.

Over the past year, the Foundation for Surgery has supported the Indigenous and Māori communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, respectively, by providing funding for several grant opportunities including six Indigenous medical students to attend the RACS Annual Scientific Congress. Thanks to our scholarships and grants program, all of the grants in the Indigenous program were awarded. Donations have also helped to continue funding the Te Rau Poka Māori Surgical Academy and a Māori Director of Surgery.

The Foundation for Surgery has also supported numerous projects undertaken by the RACS Global Health program. The amazing work achieved by the Global Health program is outlined further in the report.

The Foundation for Surgery Committee and management team continue to work through the goals of the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. Actions have included reducing the amount of printing and physical material sent to donors and moving to predominantly electronic messages ensuring financial and environmental sustainability; providing more communication to donors; and considering other avenues to raise donations such as reaching out to corporate entities and commencement of organising an inaugural fundraising gala in 2025. The fundraising gala will be an exciting and new event in the Foundation for Surgery calendar and we look forward to seeing many donors in attendance.

Due to internal RACS structural changes, the Scholarships and Grants team has returned to the management of the Foundation for Surgery. In 2025, we also look forward to working with a new Chief Operations and Partnerships Officer.

The Foundation for Surgery Committee is delighted that three of its members, Dr Ruth Mitchell, Mr Tony Lewis and Mr John Corcoran renewed their appointments to the Committee and will serve for another three years.

The Foundation for Surgery Committee and team are excited for 2025 and the fundraising year ahead and we look forward working with you, our donors, to continue the vision to raise the much-needed funding to support quality surgical care when and where it is needed most.

To all of you and your families, the Foundation for Surgery Committee and team wishes you a wonderful year for 2025.

Sincerely,



John Batten

# Impact in Action

## **Dr Justin Parr, 2024 recipient of the Poate Family Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Travel Grant**

Dr Justin Parr received the 2024 Poate Family Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Travel Grant and will undertake an advanced hand and wrist Fellowship. The Fellowship provides advanced training in the management of hand and wrist pathology, particularly in a high-volume elective setting which does not currently exist in the New Zealand Plastic Surgery training program.

“I expect that I will be a safe and competent hand and wrist surgeon, with 3/4 of my required time to achieve a PFET qualification in hand surgery. I expect that my experience and skill in managing both common and uncommon hand and wrist pathology will increase, to the point that I am confident managing the vast range of presentations in this field. I expect that I will have developed an understanding of wrist arthroscopy and its relevance in treating carpal pathology - something that I have had very little exposure to during my formal plastic surgery training.”

## **Associate Professor Anthony Glover, 2024 recipient of the John Mitchell Crouch Scholarship**

Associate Professor Anthony Glover is an academic Endocrine Surgeon who aims to improve the care of people with cancer by performing research with impact, providing expert surgical care and improving the practice of surgery and mentoring and developing future surgeons, researchers, and the healthcare workforce. Associate Professor Glover received the 2024 John Mitchell Crouch Scholarship and will undertake a research project titled “Improving outcomes for patients with advanced thyroid cancer”.

“Thyroid cancer is one of the most common cancers diagnosed but most are small and slow growing, however some people present with advanced thyroid cancer which can grow into the neck and have traditionally had limited treatment options. However, if these cancers are analysed for gene mutations and medication for these mutations are used (called neo-adjuvant therapy) some patients have shrinkage of these cancers which can make surgery possible and can lead to long-term survival. This project will provide a platform across Australia and NZ to understand how patients are presenting with advanced thyroid cancer and provide access to mutation analysis and advice for access to medications. A national network will be created, and analysis performed to understand which patients benefit from this approach and which do not. This project will also lead to an understanding of the economic benefits of this approach to develop it further in the future.”

## **RACS Paediatric surgical team visit to Apia, Samoa**

A RACS Paediatric surgical team with Dr Askar Kukkady and Dr Celine Hamad, travelled to Apia, Samoa, in June 2024 to assess and treat paediatric patients at the Tupua Tamasese Meaole (TTM) hospital.

The RACS team worked closely with local clinicians to conduct pre-surgical consultations with children and their parents. Thirty children were diagnosed with a range of conditions, including Hirschsprung disease. TTM hospital very kindly allocated two operating theatres to the RACS team.

All of the children who had surgery recovered well. This is a great relief to everyone, the RACS paediatric team, the local clinicians, and especially the children’s parents and extended families. The children’s families were waiting patiently for hours to hear the news that their much-loved children have come through their various procedures with a good health outcome.

One of Dr Kukkady's patients was a 3-year-old boy with Hirschsprung's Disease. Askar had first seen this child as a 20-month-old in 2023, during the RACS' paediatric team's visit to Samoa when he performed a biopsy to obtain confirmation of the condition. Hirschsprung's was confirmed, so this young boy was placed on the patient list for surgery by the RACS surgical team planned for 2024. Askar performed what is called a pull through which will enable this patient to have normal bowel movements. This really is life changing surgery for this child and also his family.

The mother of this little boy has two other children, both boys, one who is four and the other just 12 months old. She was just 22 years old herself and was very worried about her son. During his pre-surgical visit, the RACS team had blown up examination gloves to give to him as a makeshift balloon. It had the desired effect and certainly helped ease his nerves. When returning to hospital for his surgery, the young boy knew exactly where he was and immediately asked where the balloons were. Before entrusting him to the surgical team, his mother had told him to be strong and not to cry. She said she "trusted Askar" and had "thanked God for him and the RACS team".

This is just one example of many little lives changed during this visit.



Dr Kukkady with young patient

# Indigenous Health

## Te Rau Poka: Māori Surgical Trainee Academy

Te Rau Poka Māori Surgical Academy is a Kaupapa Māori intervention programme that supports the identification, recruitment and career aspirations of future Māori surgeons based in Aotearoa New Zealand. The focus of this project has been to establish Te Rau Poka through which RACS can achieve its goal of increasing numbers of Māori surgeons as a significant step towards achieving equity in surgical outcomes for Māori.

Te Rau Poka in conjunction with Pūhoro STEMM Academy engages with secondary school students in Northland which has one of the highest populations of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand and low decile areas of Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Manawatu, Wellington and Canterbury regions. Te Rau Poka has presented on pathways to surgical careers and also encouraged students to develop new skills in laparoscopy and bone fixation at these events. This part of the program is currently supported by existing Māori FRACS and SET Trainees. This year, three members of the RACS Māori Health Advisory Group presented to Māori High School students' year 11 –13 at several events around the country. We also had two medical students present in Whangārei. The first event was held in Auckland at AUT Manukau campus. Presenter John Mutu-Grigg and two trainees were in attendance. Johnson and Johnson staff provided additional demonstration equipment.

Through Te Rau Pokas's relationship with Te Oranga (the Māori Medical Students Association), RACS has been able to engage with all Māori medical students in AoNZ via the annual student Hui-a-tau and 3-day Kura Reo workshops. The hui was held on 10-11 August 2024 in Wellington for Māori Fellows and SET trainees and was attended by fifteen participants including guest presenters (5) and RACS staff (2).

The Te Rau Poka research project has been completed, with a final report being presented to the Māori Health Advisory Group in November.



Hui-a-tau dinner August 2024



RACS award from the te ORA Maori Medical practitioners conference September 2024





Pūhoro session in Auckland



Te ORA Careers Day



### **Māori Director of Surgery**

The Māori Supervisor of Surgical Training position aims to increase the rate and success of the Māori surgical workforce growth enabling RACS to train Māori medical graduates in surgical careers but ensuring that Māori in RACS are culturally supported, valued, and maintain their cultural links and skillsets.

The purpose of the RACS Māori Supervisor of Surgical Training is to provide culturally competent pastoral care and support for Māori non-accredited surgical registrars and SET trainees with the goal of increasing the Indigenous Māori surgical workforce in a culturally competent and culturally safe manner which values Indigenous ways of practicing and providing surgery.

This position is being funded by the Foundation for Surgery for 2024 – 2026.

### **Indigenous Health Scholarships and Grants**

There were 12 recipients of the Indigenous Health learning and development grants in 2024.

# Global Health

## Globally Accredited Medical and Nursing training Programs

### 8 training trips including

- PLS and APLS undertaken by 115 participants in PNG Goroka & Port Moresby
- APLS presented twice in Suva, Fiji; once in Labasa, Fiji; twice in Timor Leste. In Suva, Fiji, 18 of 19 participants successfully passed on the first visit. In Timor Leste, 42 participants were involved.
- 2 participants from Fiji undertook a 3 day EMST/CCrisp course in Australia on 6 December.
- 17 participants from Fiji successfully undertook and passed the ANZGITA.



RACS Global Health Volunteer, Rick Caterwell, delivering specialist Urology Lecture to local clinicians in Tuvalu

## Visiting Medical Team Deployments

-22 trips deployed from a variety of specialities (majority ENT) to 12 countries including:

- \*Vanuatu
- \*Timor Leste
- \*Cook Islands
- \*Tuvalu
- \*Tonga
- \*Kiribati
- \*Samoa
- \*Fiji
- \*Solomon Islands
- \*Nauru
- \*FSM Pohnpepi & Chuuk
- \*Marshall islands



RACS Global Health Volunteer Team delivery specialist ENT surgery in the Solomon Islands



### Consultations

-Total of 1,401 including 1,138 consultations plus 263 non-PCSHWHIP.  
This is 301 more than 2023.

### Operations

-Total of 450 including 112 non-PCSHWHIP



Senior Clinician delivering specialist surgery on the island of Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia



RACS Global Health Volunteer Paediatrics Team delivering surgery in Samoa



Post Graduate Certificate in Peri-Operative Nursing from Australian College of Nursing  
-12 of the 14 nurses who commenced completed the certificate. Participants were from Palau, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tuvalu, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau, and Kiribati

### Pacific Islands Virtual On-line training in Surgery (PIVOTS)

PIVOTS is an innovative virtual training which was developed with Fiji National University and Monash Children's Simulation Centre. It can be delivered remotely via virtual interface.

In 2024:

- an advanced course was implemented in Fiji
- an introductory course was implemented in Samoa and Vanuatu
- Set to commence in Tonga in 2025.



RACS Global Health Volunteers and Staff in Tuvalu with Government Ministers, senior Health staff and members of the Australian High Commission

## Global Health Scholarships

-6 RACS Global Health Scholars deployed to Australia to receive specialist training.



Rowan Nicks scholars Dr Ravuama Raqisia and Dr Benjamin Thomas (for photo 'Darwin NSAASC')



Supervisor Professor Silvana Marasco with Weary Dunlop Boon Pong scholar Dr Surakarn Saraithong (for photo 'WDBP')



Convenor A/P Hamish Ewing with ASC scholar Dr Umesh Pradhan \ (for photo 'ASC')

# Scholarships and Grants

15

*Research  
Scholarships (new and  
continuing)*

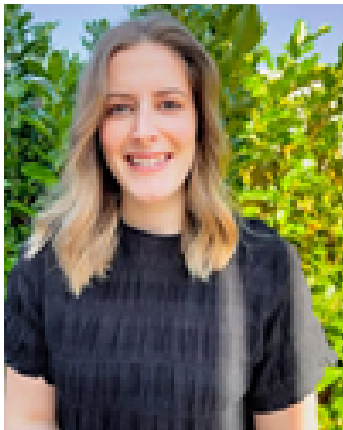
30

*Learning and  
Development  
Grants*

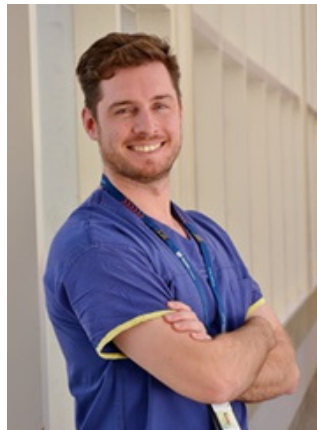
Due to the generosity of our donors, living and through bequests, RACS is able to offer its surgical research scholarships and learning and development grants. The scholarships and grants enable recipients to enhance their careers, increase their knowledge and lead to better surgical care of patients.

Unfortunately, in 2023 there was a significant downturn in market investment returns and therefore many of the scholarships and grants were not able to be offered in 2024.

Some of the 2024 recipients submitted acceptance videos, which you will be able to view at <https://www.surgeons.org/Resources/Member-benefits/scholarships-and-grants-program/Learning-and-Development-Grant-Recipients-2024>. These are some of the amazing 2024 recipients



Dr Nasya Thompson - ASC Peer Support Award



Dr Michael Bozin - Tour de Cure Cancer Research Scholarship



Dr Ngoc Ha - John Buckingham Travel Grant



Dr Charles Coventry - Margorie Hooper Travel Scholarship



Dr Li Lian Kuan - Pickard Robotic Training Grant



AProf Anthony Glover - John Mitchell Crouch Scholarship



Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

## Foundation for Surgery

250 - 290 Spring St, East Melbourne  
VIC 3002, Australia

[www.surgeons.org/foundation/](http://www.surgeons.org/foundation/)

T: +61 3 9249 1110

F: +61 3 9249 1256

E: [foundation@surgeons.org](mailto:foundation@surgeons.org)