



RESEARCH SECTION ANNUAL REPORT (2016)

Section: Health Research
Division: Health Planning and Information Division
Station: Vaiola, Tongatapu
Section Head: Mr. Sioape Kupu – *Health Research Officer Graduate*
Reports to: Mr. Sione Hufanga – *Principal Health Planning Officer*

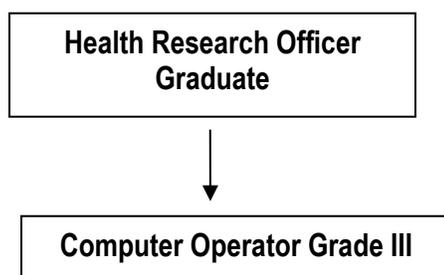
1. Mission Statement

The Health Research Section is responsible for effectively and efficiently managing, regulating, monitoring, developing and implementing health-related research activities and projects of and involving the Ministry of Health.

2. Staff Establishment as of 31st December 2016

Title	Officer's Name	No. of Post	Post Filled	Vacancies
Health Research Officer Graduate	Mr. Sioape Kupu	1	Yes	None
Computer Operator Grade III	Mrs. 'Eu'ese Fetokai	1	Yes	None

3. Sectional Structure



4. Staffing and Financial Information:

Post	Salary Scale
Health Research Officer Graduate	Band L
Computer Operator Grade III	Band O

5. Sectional Objectives:

- Managing and Monitoring all research proposals/applications submitted to the Ministry of Health;
- Providing Secretariat for the National Health Ethics and Research Committee which reviews and approves research proposals;
- Developing a health research policy;
- Strengthening the Research Capacity of the Ministry of Health;
- Identifying health research needs of the Ministry of Health;
- Building and supporting relations and collaborations with Sections, Divisions, Organizations both locally, regionally and internationally in promoting and developing research;



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- g) Responsible for the Management and Development of the Cancer Registry within the Ministry of Health;
- h) Collecting and Analyzing Cancer data for Research purposes.

6. Statistical Information / Milestones for the Year.

1. The NHERC had 3 Full Committee meetings during 2016 at bi-monthly to monthly intervals with 6 Expedited Review Circulations as summarized in the table below.

#	Type of Meeting	Dates
1	Full Committee meeting	03 rd March 2016
2	Full Committee meeting	16 th June 2016
3	Full Committee meeting	19 th October 2016
#	Type of Meeting	Dates
1	Expedited Review Circulation	30 th March 2016
2	Expedited Review Circulation	08 th April 2016
3	Expedited Review Circulation	27 th June 2016
4	Expedited Review Circulation	05 th July 2016
5	Expedited Review Circulation	09 th August 2016
6	Expedited Review Circulation	12 th October 2016

2. 6 Final Reports have been submitted to the Research Section and NHERC during the year 2016.
 - ❖ The Masters Research Report “A Qualitative study exploring Tongan nurses' perspectives of the 'Advanced Nursing Diploma” by Ms. Kieh Christopherson Dunn was submitted on the 29/03/2016.
 - ❖ Organization Proposal titled “Non-Communicable disease-related disability research in the Pacific Islands” by Dr. Wendy Snowdon from Fiji National University has been completed and a copy of the final report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health on the 15/04/2016.
 - ❖ Organization Proposal titled “Giving Birth: The voices of Tongan women in Tonga and the United States” by Shelly J. Reed from BYU College of Nursing and a copy of the final report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health on the 06/05/2016.
 - ❖ A Master Thesis titled “The extent to which changes in culture and lifestyle in particular health, exercise, diet, have had an impact on Tongan society” by Jacinta Forde and a copy of the final report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health on the 06/05/2016.
 - ❖ A Master Thesis titled “The Prevalence of Chlamydia among pregnant women in Tonga” by Dr. Louise Fonua and a copy of the final report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health on the 29/06/2016
 - ❖ Undergraduate Research Proposal titled “The Clinical Effect of Short Spin Cross Match (Immediate Spin) Cross-match and Complete Match Red Cells Transfused to patients in Vaiola Hospital” by Mr. Semisi Lenati from Fiji National University has been completed and a copy of the final report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health on the 27/11/2016.



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3. The NHERC reviewed 17 new proposals (1 proposal from previous year now noted) for the year of 2016. Details are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2.

- ❖ 2 Master's Thesis
- ❖ 1 PhD Thesis
- ❖ 3 Undergraduate Proposals
- ❖ 11 Organizational/Individual Research

#	Ref. #	Title	Principal Investigator / Local Counterpart	Institution
1	190315.4	A Qualitative study exploring Tongan nurses' perspectives of the 'Advanced Nursing Diploma in the Prevention, Detection and Management of NCD'	Ms. Kieh Christopherson Dunn Sr. 'Ana Kavaefiafi	University of Liverpool England.
2	030316	Kids' Cam Tonga – Assessing Tongan children's food environment and how best to improve it	Dr. Viliami Puloka Ms. Louise Signal	University of Otago.
3	050216	Pacific multi-country Mapping and Behavioral study: HIV and STI risk vulnerability among Key Population.	Professor Heather Worth Michelle 'O Connor Dr. Louise Fonua	University of New South Wales.
4	240216	Evaluation of Tonga Anti-Tobacco Mass Media Campaign	Associate Professor Philayrath Phongsavan Mr. Sione Fifita	University of Sydney, Australia.
5	060216	Factors Contributing to Teenage Pregnancies in Tonga	Mrs. 'Ana Vaka'uta	Fiji National University.
6	260516	Hospital Staff Perception of a Collaborative Twinning Program	Professor Karen Francis Ms. Carolyn Mornane	Australia Catholic University St. John of God Health Care.
7	270516	Mercury Monitoring in women of child-bearing age in the Asia and the Pacific Region	Ms. Imogen Ingram Dr. Sunia Foliaki	University of Southern Maine
8	310516	Use of Traditional Medicinal Plants by Patients Diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Vaiola Hospital, Tongatapu, Tonga	Ms. Mita Vaka	Fiji National University
9	030616	Public Understanding of Developmental Origin of Health and Disease (DOHaD) amongst Pregnant Women and Mothers in Tonga.	Mr. Sioape Fe'iloakitau Kahomovailahi Kupu	Ministry of Health
10	020616	National Study "The Experience and Needs of Children, Including Children With Disabilities Living in Tonga"	Mrs. Gabriella 'Ilohia	Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili
11	130616	Describing Best Practice Health Promotion Programs in the Pacific	A/Professor Colin Bell	Deakin University
12	080616	Patient Satisfaction towards pharmaceutical services provided in Vaiola Hospital Outpatient Pharmacy, Tonga	Ms. Fisi'inuka Talanoa	Fiji National University
13	NHERC 04/2013	Improvement of Tongan Lifestyle Approach from Oral Health	Dr. Sayuri Kawamuri Dr. Fusi Fifita	Malimali Project 2006- 2013/DDS

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14	290916	The People living with HIV Stigma Index	Ms. Prithika Prasad Dr. Louise Fonua	Ministry of Health, Fiji / Fiji Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS
15	190716	The Policy development process in relation to food-related policies in Tonga: A case study of the School Food Policy	Associate Professor Colin Bell Dr. Catherine Lātu Mr. Sione Hufanga	C-POND Deakin University
16	100117	Seeking mo'ui lelei abroad Examining medical travel	Ms. Zakea Boeger Dr. Lisiate 'Ulufonua	Hawaii University
17	080516	Data Security Assessment for Government	Siuta Laulaupea'alu	University of Waikato

In relation to approvals, there were (#s refer to above table).

- ❖ **Terminated before NHERC Review:** 2 studies (#5 and #17) Highlighted in **yellow**
- ❖ **Rejected Approval:** 1 study (#7) Highlighted in **orange**
- ❖ **Extended Approval:** 1 study (#13) Highlighted in **green**
- ❖ **Pending Re-submission after Review:** 1 study (#10) Highlighted in **blue**
- ❖ **Approved with Conditions:** 12 studies (#1-4, #6, #8-9, #11-12, #14-16).

4. From 2014 – 2016 there have been a total of **44 proposals submitted to the NHERC** and have been reviewed and followed up (Refer to NHERC Annual Report for details).
5. *HINARI Access* was circulated to all Clinical Medical Officers on the 15th February 2016, while on Trial Mode. Full Access payment to *HINARI E-library* was finalized for 2016 on the 4th of March 2016. Access to *HINARI* is currently being used by the nursing students and staff of QSSN and the Medical Officers. Access to other departments still underway. The provision of *HINARI* started in 2015 and was a move towards promoting evidence-based practice and increasing access to knowledge and quality reading material.
6. Radio Broadcast (87.5 Radio Station) headlining on Cancer in Tonga by the Health Research Officer Graduate (Mr. Sioape Kupu) on the 30th June 2016.
7. A 5-day Workshop titled “*Outbreak Investigation*” was held on the 11th – 15th of April 2016, and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The Health Research Officer Daily-Paid Reliever (Mr. Sitaleki Tausisi) attended the workshop on behalf of the Research Section.
8. Completion of Year 3 (Class of 2013) “*Evidence-based Practice*” Queen Sālote School of Nursing Course. The Final Examination was on the 24th of February 2016. All Year 3 students passed their examinations and their Graduation was held on the 3rd of June 2016 (Pictures shown below).



Figure 1 & 2: Year 3 (Class of 2012) Research Seminar (Left) and one of the student nurses (Ms. Hepisipa Tuimoala) graduation (Right).

9. All Wards and cancer data sources in the Ministry have been allocated Cancer Trays on the 14th of March 2016 to document all Cancer cases into the Registration Forms for easier abstraction and a more inclusive approach. The Wards/Sections include:

- ❖ Surgical
- ❖ Medical
- ❖ Obstetrics / Gynecology
- ❖ Pediatrics
- ❖ ENT
- ❖ Dental
- ❖ Laboratory
- ❖ Radiology

We still plan to include other wards like Outpatient Emergency and reinforce data collection.

10. NZAid Scholarship awarded to Mr. Sioape Kupu to pursue a Masters in Health Leadership specializing in Health Management at the University of Auckland. The course commenced in July 2016 and is expected to be completed around July 2017.

11. Invited to participate in the 1-day Cancer Registration Symposium at Australia, Queensland on the 13th of April, 2016. Mr. Sioape Kupu and Mrs. 'Eu'ese Fetokai participated to represent Tonga's Cancer Registration efforts and contribute to the discussion of a Cancer Registry Hub for the Pacific (Picture shown below).



Figure 3: Tongan Representatives (Mrs. 'Eu'ese Fetokai and Mr. Sioape Kupu) – seated facing camera – with other Pacific Island representatives from other island nations of Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands.

12. Tonga's Ministry of Health submitted their efforts towards the Cancer Control to be part of the World Cancer Declaration Report 2016 on the 15th of March, 2016, the Report was launched on the 4th of November 2016 and includes a Section on Tonga. Report developed and facilitated by the Health Research Officer Graduate. (Picture shown below) or you can access the full report on the following link: http://www.uicc.org/wcd-report?utm_source=World+Cancer+Declaration+Report+Authors&utm_campaign=6763b73074-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2016_10_28&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bc6e3446ac-6763b73074-393172285

Tonga

Contributors: Ministry of Health of Tonga

WHO cancer country profile 2014 Link to profile					
Mortality (male)	Mortality (female)	Cancer plan	Cancer registry	HBV vaccination	HPV vaccination
No data	No data	Yes	Hospital-based	99%	No data
Breast screening	Cervical screening	Radiotherapy	Chemotherapy	Oral morphine	
Not generally available at public primary healthcare level	Not generally available at public primary healthcare level	Not generally available in the public health system	Not generally available in the public health system	Generally available in the public health system	

WHO NCD progress monitor 2015 Link to monitor									
Risk factor survey	NCD action plan	Tobacco taxation	Smoke-free policies	Tobacco health warnings	Alcohol availability regulations	Alcohol advertising bans	Alcohol pricing policies	Public awareness on diet/physical activity	NCD management guidelines
●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●

World Cancer Declaration Progress Report 2016

Tomorrow is now:
Our journey to 2025



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13. The Research Section is spearheading the “First 1,000 days” Baseline Survey which is primarily funded by *TongaHealth* and co-funded by the *World Health Organization*.
 - ❖ 30 Reproductive Health Nurses were trained in collaboration with the Health Promotion Officer of HPU.
 - ❖ Data Collection period commenced in July and finished in September 2017.
 - ❖ Data Collected from Outer Islands (Vava’u, Ha’apai and ‘Eua) completed.
 - ❖ 400 mothers/pregnant women were sampled.
 - ❖ Final Report estimated to be completed by the end of April 2017 (Pending analysis and final report writing).

14. The Health Planning and Information Division (including Mr. Sioape Kupu) participated in the *Workshop on Health Promotion and NCD Prevention in Tonga* at the Fa’onelua Convention Center on the 3rd of September 2016 (Picture shown below).



Figure 4: Workshop on Health Promotion and NCD Prevention in Tonga at Fa’onelua Convention Center.

15. Mr. Sioape Kupu attended the *Gender Statistics Workshop* conducted by the Government of Tonga and the Pacific Community Social Development Program on the 26th – 27th of April, 2016 (Picture shown below).

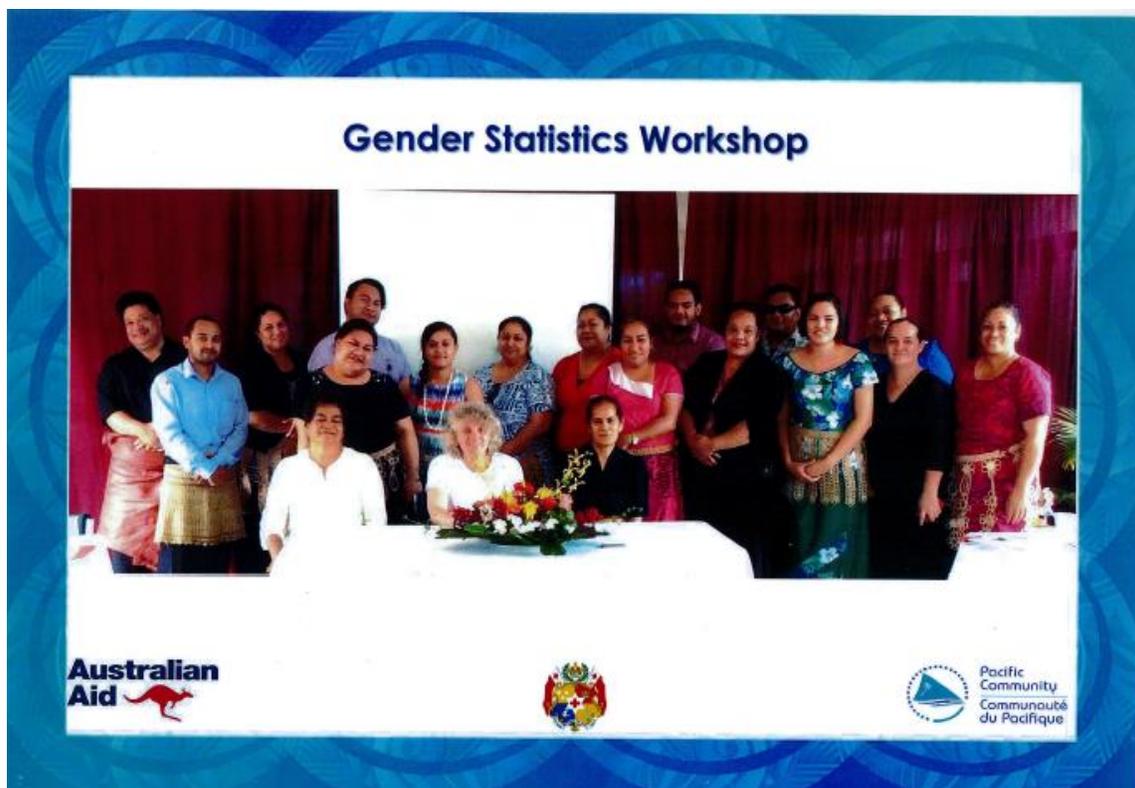


Figure 5: Gender Statistics Workshop whereby Mr. Sioape Kupu attended on the 26th – 27th of April, 2016.

16. **Ongoing work in Progress:** Various Aspects of the Research Policy are slowly coming into fruition. Sections like Research Proposal Submissions, Documentations, and Equity are complete. Other aspects like Intellectual Property, Copyright and Payment are to be incorporated into the document.

17. **Cancer Registry.**

The Cancer Registry collects a plethora of information regarding Cancer such as:

- ❖ Incidence (shown in Graphs below)
- ❖ Age
- ❖ Sex
- ❖ Topography
- ❖ Morphology
- ❖ Basis of Diagnosis
- ❖ Address / Location (Villages)
- ❖ Death Date
- ❖ Primary Cause of Death (Cancer-related Deaths).



18. Crude Top 10 Cases by Sex (Females for 2016).

Top 10 by CASES, Cancer Registry Tonga (2016), Female

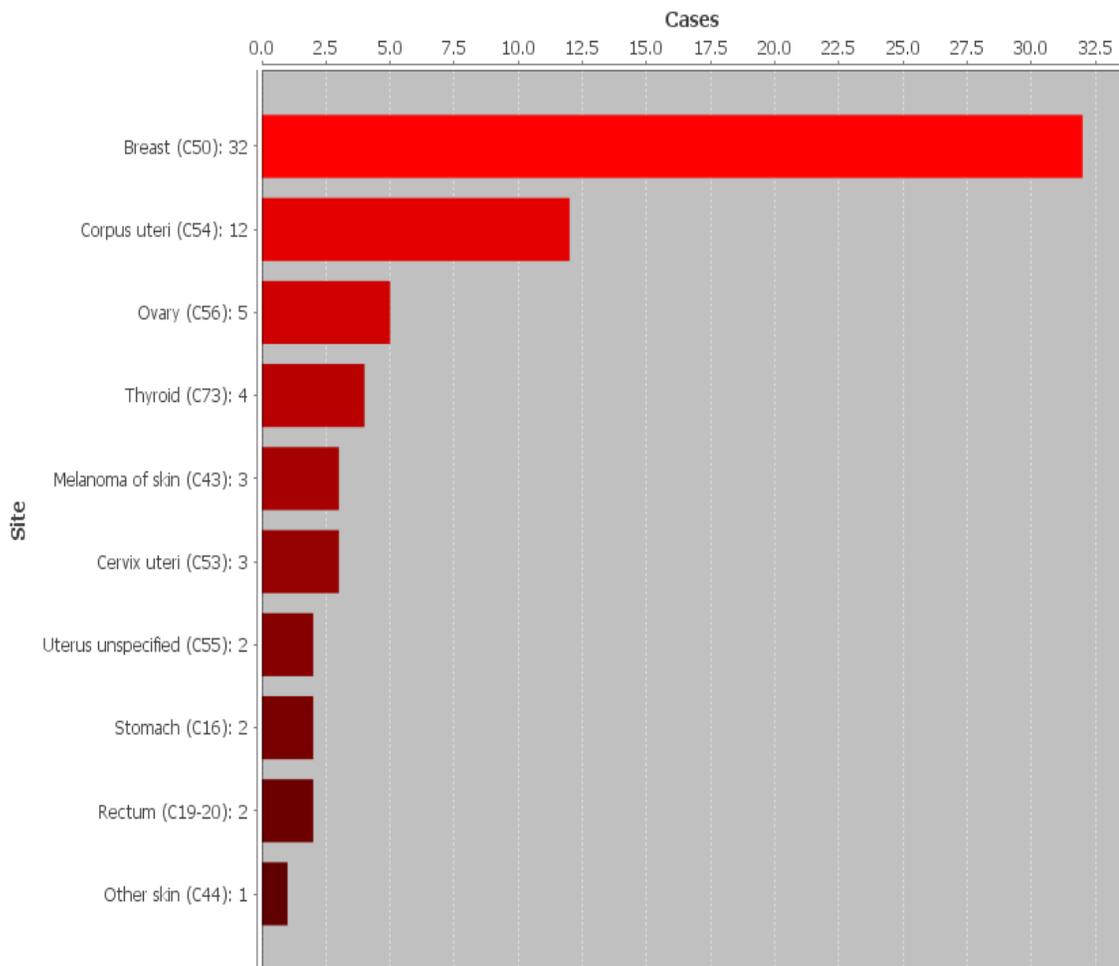


Figure 4: Crude Top Cancer sites for Females (2016)

The Top Cancer site for Females in 2016 is Breast with a total of 32 cases, followed by Corpus Uteri with 12 and thirdly Ovary with 5 cases. The disproportionate number of breast cancer cases can be attributed to a number of possible factors like the availability of better diagnostic tools like the Mammogram Machine, CT Scans, Fine Needle Aspirations, and Histopathology etc. The number of Breast Cancer cases have remained in the 30's since 2013 and remains so until today.



19. Crude Top 10 Cases by Sex (Males for 2016).

Top 10 by CASES, Cancer Registry Tonga (2016), Male

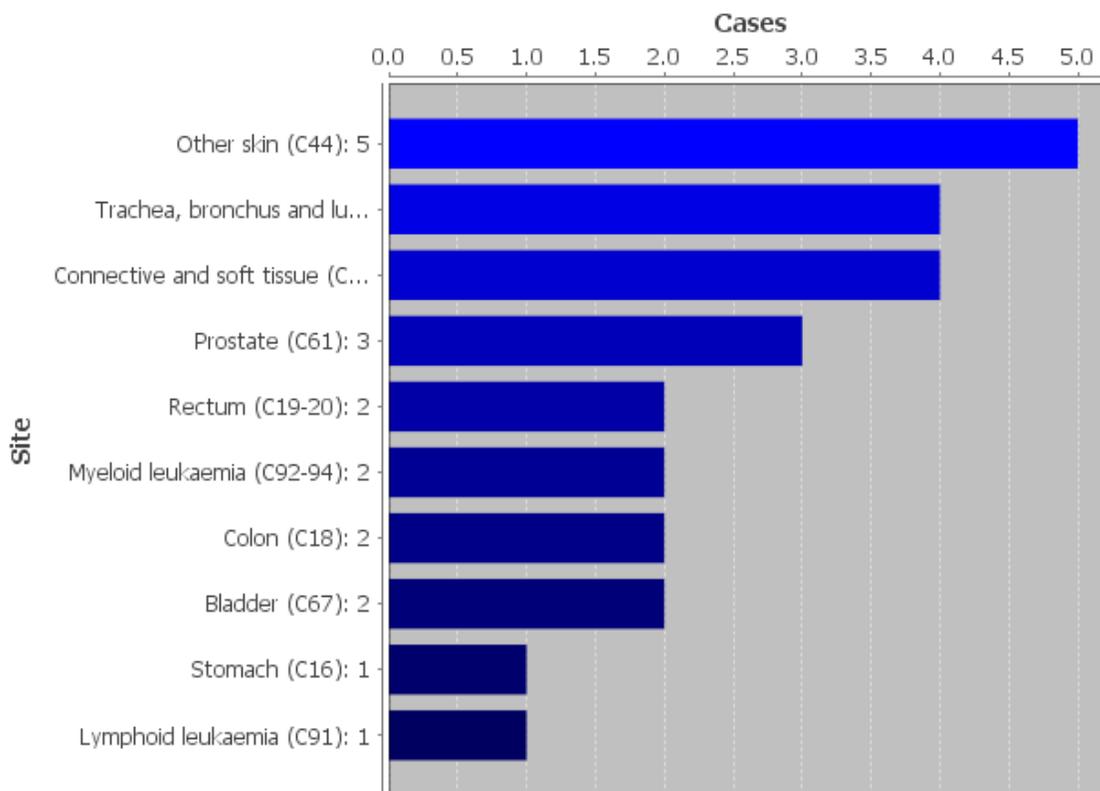


Figure 5: Crude Top 10 Cancer Cases by Site for Males (2016).

The Top Cancer site for Males is Other Skin (Melanoma and other malignant neoplasms of skin) with 5, followed by Trachea/Lung with 4 and Connective and soft tissue with a similar 4. In comparison to Females, Males have a lower incidence number. There are a multitude of possible factors like Males rarely present themselves when sick, do not follow-up or the diagnostic tools to pick up Cancers specific to males is not present or are only available when specialists visit. As a result, male cancers are sporadic.

20. Obstacles

With all things considered, with two staff at the Research Section, we have managed to accomplish a lot in relation to our functions. There are a few functions that are in progress but are hindered and limited by the human resources that we here in the Section have. The only obstacle is as follows:

The short-handed in staff: The Section requires a Research Assistant, because majority of the work-load is focused on the Secretary of the NHERC. Another support staff would help with all the administrative roles to ease and balance out the work-load. In addition, alleviate these tasks gives more room for the current Health Research Officer Graduate to complete key tasks like Policy and Strategic Plans. These tasks can be completed by the current officer however running and managing the Section and completing these tasks to a high standard. With a strong policy, the



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Section can reign in researchers more effectively and regulate any unethical research conduct so that the Kingdom is not taken advantage for.

There are many research studies being offered to the Ministry to develop and implement, mainly to Public Health, a Research Team would be far more efficient than constantly hiring outside enumerators. The Research Section will be to conduct its own Research Needs without using the pool of staff from other Sections whom are already overloaded with work.

Without a Research Team, data and information vital to the functions and operations of the Ministry are sparse. This information is needed for Evidence-based Practice, Planning and Decision-making. A Ministry without a Research component is thus inefficient in its delivery of services and unable to effectively handle issues.

Capacity Development: There is only one Officer (COGIII) who is collecting data, there is a lot of cancer data from different sources (Death Certificates, Lab X-ray, Dental Wards, Outside Organizations) to collect and register to the CanReg5 database. The skill development of the current Officer is necessary to maintain the service and the addition of another Officer to assist in data collection and maintain rapport with the Clinical wards can alleviate the workload to a more bearable state. Without any Cancer data, cancer control efforts cannot be initiated and the progress of any cancer efforts can be measured and monitored to identify any successes and weaknesses.

Collaboration with Wards in relation to Cancer Abstraction: Many of the wards are co-operative with the Data Abstraction, especially Surgical and Pediatrics. However, some Wards like Medical and Obstetrics and Gynecology are not so co-operative, this may be due to the workload and availability of the Medical Officer in Charge. As a result, majority of cases at the Medical and Obstetrics Wards are not registered and their trends not represented captured.

21. **Additional Comments:**

The Research Section is currently running on its bare minimum and the majority of the workload rests on one individual since 2014, when the Section was revived. For three years the Section has been functioning and developing further. Just because the Section is running well in relation to what it has, it should not be neglected. The Section should not feel so limited because of the progress it has done so far but rewarded even if a little. The addition of other Officers will help alleviate the workload and allow room for further development of the Section as the current Officer in charge of the Section is more than capable to train more Officers.

My only comment is that if the Ministry at least values or invests in Research, may it please allocate a little bit of human resources to the Section to aid in its functions and develop the Section more.

Thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely,

Sioape Kupu
Health Research Officer Graduate