Middle ear disease and Hearing Loss in Fiji

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Introduction: Middle ear disease (MED), or otitis media, is a commonly acquired childhood ear condition. Yet if undetected and untreated, the more severe, chronic form of MED can develop and result in a number of serious medical complications, including permanent hearing loss. There is an estimated high prevalence of chronic MED and MED related hearing loss in the Pacific region (1-4) and Fiji (5-6). However, a lack of reliable population-based data and a paucity of information regarding disease perceptions and clinical management restricts service development.

Method: The mixed-methods study has been developed within a social-epidemiological framework and is influenced by research conducted by Elizabeth for her Master of Public Health thesis. The work will:
1. Examine prevalence and risk factors of MED in 3-5 year olds attending health centres and community nursing stations in the Suva-Nausori corridor.
2. Examine perceptions, knowledge and clinical management of MED. Interviews and questionnaires will be conducted with community members and health professionals.

Results: Preliminary cross-sectional study fieldwork has been conducted in a primary school in Niue. The questionnaire and interview schedule is in initial stages of validity testing and will be piloted in Fiji and Auckland. Data collection will commence once Ministry of Health ethics approval has been granted.

Discussion: The study aims to contribute to workforce and service development for ear and hearing health. Addressing MED is a key element of the Ear, Nose, Throat and Audiology regional strategy adopted in April 2016 by all fourteen Pacific Island Nations.

References:

Word Count: 246 words (not including title, authors and references)

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The work has been presented to internal and external examiners, and members of the Section of Audiology, as part of Elizabeth’s provisional year doctoral review. It has also been presented to members of the Section of Audiology, Pacific Health, Global Health and Counties Manukau District Health Board during a Global Hearing Health Seminar in Auckland, August 2016.

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