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Press Release

FNU joins the fight against breast cancer

Suva, Fiji. The Fiji National University (FNU) has partnered with the Ministry of Health and Fiji Cancer Society to take a lead role in creating greater cancer awareness at the national level with the launch of the Pinktober Campaign.

The event, which was held in Suva last Friday was launched by the Acting Prime Minister and Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum.

Speaking at the opening, the honourable minister said a common practice noted by health practitioners is that patients depend more on traditional healing rather than seeking immediate medical attention.

“Patients with breast cancer go to traditional healers for massage, they are shy to come to the doctors and they treat it as a taboo,” said Sayed-Khaiyum.

“You may be at the height of your career and suddenly your entire life can come to a halt when you get this sickness. So we need to speak about it, we need to create awareness.”

Associate Professor Surgery at FNU’s College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) Dr Ifereimi Waqainabete said at least one or two breast cancer surgeries are conducted at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWMH) in Suva every week.

“The incidents of breast cancer are alarmingly increasing,” expressed Dr Waqainabete, who is also a General Surgeon at the CWM Hospital.

While addressing guests at the launch, Dr Waqainabete revealed that 128 breast cancer surgeries have been conducted at CWMH so far this year.

Dr Waqainabete said it’s important that patients present themselves early at hospitals so they can receive treated in a timely manner.

“One of the highly rated messages in fighting breast cancer is early detection. People should know that in Fiji, we are able to treat the early forms of breast cancer which leads to higher long-term survival rate,” reiterated Dr Waqainabete.

Fellow FNU Alumni, Dr Raghawa Sharma, who is currently a consultant pathologist at the Wesley Hospital in Australia said it’s important that patients and their families are familiar with the diagnosis and treatment processes.

“We examine and confirm the diagnosis following which a biopsy is done. We then look at it under the microscope but before that there’s a lot of technicians who process these things in a proper way. Then we decide which grade the tissue is. The grade of the tissue shows how fast the tissue is growing,” said Dr Sharma.

Dr Sharma said females need to be encouraged to undertake self-examination and visit medical facilities to undertake breast examination and mammogram.

Education lectures and other awareness activities are being organised at FNU campuses to create greater awareness regarding the Pinktober campaign.

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About the Fiji National University: The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).