

Accelerating SDG 3: PIHRS 2026



SPOTLIGHT

From Northern Rivers to Pacific Shores: Dr. Margot Parkes Reflections on Innovation at FIPHR

TB Day highlights need for long term funding

About the Cover Photo: Dr Wilson (second from left) with staff members from CDRC and RISE holding the TB Guidelines Handbook

INSIGHTS

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Welcome Note



Dear Readers,

Let's go - As we prepare for the annual Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium (PIHRS), I look forward to the conversations, collaboration opportunities and networking that the Symposium will provide over the 5 days. All the event details are available <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/college-of-medicine/research-cmnhs/pihrs/> or you can email me via PIHRS@fnu.ac.fj

Read about what's planned for the 2026 PIHRS and more in this issue of INSIGHTS.

As always, do remember to follow our Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research page on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61573882786738> and LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/fiji-institute-of-pacific-health-research-fiphr-a034073a3/> for news, events and research updates or let us know what you think we should highlight in our next issue.

Vinaka Vakalevu.

Dr Donald Wilson

Accelerating SDG 3: PIHRS 2026 Set to Chart the Future of Pacific Health Research



The Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR) is pleased to announce the 2026 Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium (PIHRS), scheduled for August 31st to September 4th. Hosted at the Fiji National University's Nasinu Campus in Suva, this year's symposium centers on the theme: "Accelerating SDG 3 in the Pacific: Research, Accountability and Impact toward Vision 2050."

The three-day core programme offers a comprehensive exploration of the region's health landscape. Day one focuses on health systems acceleration, followed by a deep dive into systems integration on day two, and concluding with a focus on translating evidence into policy impact on day three. Key thematic tracks include Climate and Planetary Health, NCDs and Mental Health, and Indigenous Knowledge, ensuring a holistic approach to Pacific wellness.

This event is a vital platform for researchers, clinicians, Ministry of Health officials, and regional partners to collaborate. We invite all interested parties to contribute to this dialogue. The call for abstracts opens on April 13th and will close on July 31st, 2026.

For further details or inquiries, please contact Dr. Donald Wilson at PIHRS@fnu.ac.fj. Join us in shaping a healthier future for the Pacific!

Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium

PIHRS 2026

"Accelerating SDG 3 in the Pacific: Research, Accountability and Impact toward Vision 2050"

31 August - 4 September 2026

Fiji National University, Nasinu Campus, Suva Fiji

Register Now!

3 DAY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

DAY 1 - MON 31 AUG	DAY 2 - TUE 1 SEP	DAY 3 - WED 2 SEP
SDG 3 Acceleration & Health Systems	Health Challenges & Systems Intergration	Evidence - Policy - Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official Opening Ceremony Keynote: SDG 3 Progress & Gaps High-Level Ministerial Panel Parallel Sessions - Rounds 1 & 2 Networking Reception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keynote: Disease Prevention & Equity Panel: From Research to Policy Parallel Sessions: Rounds 1 & 2 Poster Presentations & Judging PIHRS Networking Dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keynote: Financing & Scaling Impact Ministerial Accountability Panel SDG 3 Rapid - Fire Presentations Research Interest Group Sessions PIHRS Awards & Closing Ceremony

THEMATIC TRACKS

- SDG 3 - All 13 Targets
- Communicable Diseases (HIV, TB & more)
- NCDs & Mental Health
- Climate & Planetary Health
- Digital Health & Data Innovation
- Implementation Science & Policy Translation
- Indigenous Knowledge & Community Research
- Health Systems, Workforce & Education

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Researchers & Academics
- Regional & Development Partners
- Clinicians & Health Workers
- Ministry of Health Officials
- WHO | SPC | NGOs

SUBMIT YOUR ABSTRACT
Open: 13 April
Closes: 31 July 2026

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS OPEN

Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR)
College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences, Fiji National University
For more information contact: Dr Donald Wilson: PIHRS@fnu.ac.fj

Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium

PIHRS 2026

SIDE EVENT

STRATEGIC HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUES

Research Meets Policy

Two expert dialogues linking Pacific Health Research directly to programming redesign, national policy and regional accountability

DATE | TIME: 3 Sept | 830am - 1pm

VENUE: FNU NASINU CAMPUS

FORMAT: Invitation | Open Registration

01 WORKSHOP 1: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GBV Dialogue: Reframing the National Response

HIGH-LEVEL

Theme: Engaging iTaukei Men, Institutional Systems

Key Focus Areas:

- Are our current GBV response frameworks effective?
- Engaging iTaukei men as key stakeholders
- Role of Vanua, marriage systems & Masculinity norms
- data gaps on perpetrators & systems response

Participants:

- Great Council of Chiefs Representatives
- Ministry of Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation
- FWCC, FWRM & Feminists organisations
- Faith-based & Civil Society Organisations

LEAD: SPACE Project
Expected Outputs: Policy dialogue summary, National GBV response design recommendations, Potential Concept Note for follow-up research

02 WORKSHOP 2: TUBERCULOSIS PROGRAMME

TB Dialogue: Sustaining Impact In TB Control

HIGH-LEVEL

Theme: Lessons in Transition, Integration and Resilience in Fiji. Fiji has demonstrated strong success in TB control in the past, including high treatment success rates. As health systems evolve and external support transitions, this dialogue reflects on lessons learned and identifies practical pathways to sustain and improve TB outcomes.

Key Focus Areas:

- Lessons from past TB programme success
- Navigating health systems transitions & donor changes
- Integration with HIV, NCDs & social determinants
- Practical pathways to sustain & improve outcomes

Key Contributors:

- National TB Programme (NTP)
- CDCR Laboratory Team
- MoH TB Programme
- WHO / Global Fund & Regional TB Stakeholders

LEAD: CDCR & MoH TB
Expected Outputs: Strengthened partnerships for TB Control, Practical recommendations for sustaining TB outcomes, Potential framework for continued programme improvement

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Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium

PIHRS 2026

PIHRS DINNER

Talanoa for Transformation: Leadership, Accountability & the Future of Health in the Pacific

You are warmly invited to join fellow researchers, policymakers, clinicians & partners from across the Pacific for an elegant evening of connection, celebration and conversation at the heart of PIHRS 2026. This is the premier networking occasion of the Symposium—a moment to forge partnerships that will shape Pacific health for a generation.

1st September 2026 | 6:30pm | Smart Casual/ Pacific Formal | Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva, Fiji

Welcome Reception | **Formal Dinner** | **Talanoa Panels** | **Connections**

- Pre-dinner drinks & canapes with informal networking
- Pacific-inspired cuisine at the Grand Pacific Hotel
- Two convened panels woven through the evening programme
- Researchers, ministers, WHO & regional partners

Talanoa Panels

Talanoa Panel One
Leadership & Accountability in Pacific Health
A candid dialogue with senior health leaders on what it takes to drive meaningful, lasting change across Pacific health systems

Talanoa Panel Two
The Future of Health in the Pacific Research, Vision & 2050
Forward-looking conversation on the evidence, partnerships & collective will needed to achieve the Blue Pacific 2050 health vision

Attendance by Invitation | Registration
Places are limited. Dinner is included in the full Symposium registration. Additional seats available - Contact FIPHR to reserve your place.

RSVP & Register

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Pacific Islands Health Research Symposium

PIHRS 2026

WRITING INTENSIVES

RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING

WRITE . PUBLISH . FUND

Intensive writing workshops to turn your Pacific Health Research into submitted manuscripts, funded proposals and peer networks in just 1.5 days.

START Thur 3 Sep 2pm | **FINISH** Fri 4 Sep 4pm | **LOCATION** FNU Nasinu Campus | **EACH STREAM** 25-30 Participants

FOUR WRITING STREAM - CHOOSE YOUR TRACK

STREAM 1	STREAM 2	STREAM 3	STREAM 4
Manuscript Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal targeting & Scope matching Structuring arguments for reviewers Abstract & Introduction masterclass Navigating peer review <p>OUTPUT: Manuscript ready for Journal submission</p>	Concept Note Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem framing & needs analysis Theory of change development Donor alignment & Positioning Clear, compelling narrative <p>OUTPUT: Concept Note ready for funding calls</p>	Proposal Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology design & articulation Budget development & justification Partnership & consortium framing Workplan & logical framework <p>OUTPUT: Full research proposal drafted</p>	Grant Proposal Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive funding landscape Review criteria & scoring Differential & innovation framing Peer critique & proposal refinement <p>OUTPUT: Grant proposal refined & near-ready</p>

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Researchers with data to publish
- Anyone with a draft needing help
- Post-graduate & early career researchers
- NGOs & Health Staff

SECURE YOUR STREAM PLACE | Limited to 25-30 participants per stream.

REGISTER NOW

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For more information contact: Dr Donald Wilson: PIHRS@fnu.ac.fj

TB Day highlights need for long term funding



Marking World TB Day on March 24, members from FIPHR and CDRC were part of the celebrations at Ratu Sukuna Park. With the theme Yes - We can End TB, we speak to Dr Ilikena Malo, Research Fellow at CDRC to learn more about TB.

"What role does CDRC/FIPHR have with TB? If not a current role then what role / collaboration do you see in the future with the Ministry of Health.

Right now, the Communicable Disease Research Centre (CDRC) at FIPHR/FNU is working with the Ministry of Health's TB Unit to develop the Training of Trainers (ToT) package for the 2025 Fiji National TB Management Guidelines.

·This work will:

- Turn the new national TB guidelines into clear, practical training modules for doctors, nurses and other frontline staff.
- Use real Fiji TB cases to teach diagnosis, treatment and follow-up for adults, children, drug-resistant TB, TB-HIV and TB-diabetes.
- Equip a core group of national and divisional trainers with facilitator guides, slides, exercises and tools so they can roll out high-quality TB training across the country.
- Strengthen skills in contact tracing, TB preventive treatment, use of GeneXpert and X-ray, patient-centred care, and proper recording and reporting.

By doing this, CDRC/FIPHR is helping the TB programme to:

- Standardise care, so a person with TB receives the same high-quality management whether they are in Suva, Lautoka, Labasa or an outer island.
- Build lasting capacity, by training trainers who can keep teaching and mentoring staff over time.
- Apply research findings in practice, for example on TB deaths, lost to follow-up, TB in children, and the best use of new diagnostics and shorter, all-oral treatment regimens.

In simple terms: the Ministry of Health leads the fight against TB; CDRC/FIPHR's role is to turn evidence and guidelines into skills, training and tools that help health workers deliver better TB care every day.

- **As the BCG Vaccine does not 100% prevent TB infection, what other preventative measures can be taken?**

- Find and treat TB early: Anyone with a persistent cough, weight loss or night sweats should be tested and, if needed, started quickly on treatment so they stop spreading TB.
- Protect close contacts: Screen family members and other close contacts of TB patients, and offer short TB preventive treatment, especially for children and people living with HIV.
- Improve environments: Use good ventilation, avoid overcrowding, fast-track coughing patients in clinics, and use masks where appropriate.
- Reduce risk factors: Support people to stop smoking and harmful alcohol use, and improve control of diabetes, HIV and undernutrition.
- Active awareness and community messaging: Use radio, TV, social media, community outreach, and the voices of TB survivors and advocates - to reduce stigma, promote early care-seeking, and encourage people to complete treatment.

- **For TB patients, the treatment takes many months and dozens of pills. How is research helping to make the treatment shorter and easier so that people can get back to their jobs and families faster?"**

TB treatment used to mean long stays at Tamavua Twomey Hospital, far from work and family. Thanks to new evidence and Fiji's 2025 TB Guidelines, most patients no longer need to be admitted for the full course of treatment. Once people are on the right medicines, their infectiousness usually falls sharply within about two weeks, so they can safely continue treatment at home with good follow-up. TB services have also been decentralised from Twomey to sub-divisional hospitals and health centres across the country. The TB Unit is training and supporting these facilities, using the new training package that CDRC/FIPHR is developing, so they can manage TB care and follow-up locally.

This means many patients can now go to their nearest health facility instead of travelling all the way to Tamavua, making treatment more convenient and less disruptive to their lives.

- **"The theme this year is 'Yes! We Can End TB.' From your perspective as a researcher, what is the one thing, whether it's more money, better technology, or more awareness that would finally allow us to cross the finish line and end this disease for good?"**

From a researcher's perspective, the one thing we need most is strong, sustained political commitment, backed by long-term support from government and donor agencies. With that kind of commitment, TB funding stops being a short-term project and becomes a core, predictable part of the health budget, which is essential for sustainability. It allows Fiji to invest in things that only pay off over many years, like building a skilled TB workforce, strengthening laboratories, and rolling out digital systems that track every patient from diagnosis to cure. Donors can then align their support behind a clear national elimination roadmap, filling strategic gaps instead of running stand-alone, time-limited activities.

Political commitment also drives policy changes that make TB services more people-centred and integrated with primary care, HIV and diabetes services, so the system keeps performing even when specific projects end. It creates space for continuous training and supervision, like the ToT packages we are developing now, so good practice becomes the norm and not the exception. Strong leadership keeps TB high on the public agenda, reducing stigma and encouraging people to come early for testing and complete treatment. In short, we already have powerful tools; ending TB for good will depend on sustained political will and financing that make those tools available, high-quality and resilient in every community, year after year.

GROUNDING RESEARCH IN COMMUNITY: THE REFLECT FIJI TRIAL MOVES TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION



Research often starts with a question, but its true impact is only realized when we step into our communities and listen. At the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR), we believe that for research to be effective, it must be grounded in the lived realities of the people it aims to serve.

Recently, the REFLECT Fiji Trial team traveled to Tavua for a critical series of stakeholder consultations. The mission was simple yet vital: to sit down with national stakeholders, local leaders, and community members to prepare for the next phase of our study.

Why Tavua?

Tavua was strategically selected to represent Fiji because it is consistently identified as one of the country's hottest locations, according to Fiji Meteorological Service data. This makes it the ideal setting to rigorously assess heat mitigation interventions, specifically "cool roof" technology in real-world conditions.

Leadership in the Field

Over two days, the team consulted with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, the Sub-Divisional Medical Officer (SDMO) for Tavua, and the Tavua District Office.

A highlight of the visit was the active participation of Dr. Donald Wilson, Director of FIPHR, and Ms. Avelina Rokoduru, Senior Advisor for Research Operations. Their presence in the field underscores our institutional commitment to being present and accountable to the communities we study.

Walking through Yasiyasi and Toko settlements offered insights that no map or spreadsheet could capture. Observing housing structures and community layouts firsthand allows us to refine our study sites with logistical precision and empathy.

The Roadmap for REFLECT

As we move into implementation, the trial will focus on 400 households:

- Primary Communities: Tavualevu Village and Yasiyasi Settlement.
- Secondary Communities: Nabuna, Korovou, and Vanuakula Villages, along with Toko Settlement.
- The Design: 200 households will receive the cool roof intervention immediately, while 200 will serve as a control group, receiving the intervention at the study's conclusion. This ensures both robust data and equitable access to benefits.

Partnership and Ethics

Central to our work is the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process, launching this April. We aren't just looking for participants; we are building a partnership through transparent information sharing and formal community endorsement.

A Call for Collaboration

The REFLECT trial sits at the vital intersection of climate resilience and public health. Our findings will directly inform policy-making in Fiji and offer scalable solutions for the entire Pacific region. We warmly welcome partners interested in technical collaboration or funding support. By investing in this trial, you are investing in community-driven solutions to one of our region's most pressing challenges. **Research in the Pacific must always start and end with the community.**





From Northern Rivers to Pacific Shores: Dr. Margot Parkes Reflections on Innovation at FIPHR

Dr. Margot Parkes (MBChB, MAS, PhD) | UNBC

While the snow-dusted forests of Northern British Columbia and the tropical islands of Fiji might seem worlds apart, Dr. Margot Parkes sees a powerful common thread. A professor at the University of Northern British Columbia for 17 years, Dr. Parkes recently shared her reflections on her time with the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR), highlighting a shared spirit of rural resilience and indigenous strength.

A Strength-Based Perspective

Rather than focusing on what remote regions lack, Dr. Parkes emphasizes a strength-based approach. She suggests that smaller, innovative hubs like FIPHR have a unique opportunity to "leapfrog" over traditional models, leading the way in areas where the rest of the world is still struggling to catch up. "It's so easy when there's such a lot of innovation happening from a small place to focus on the things that you don't have. I really want to share back with you what I've observed that is so many of the things that you do have here."

Rivers as Teachers

Dr. Parkes' journey to planetary health is deeply personal, rooted in her identity as Tangata Tiriti (Tau Iwi) from Aotearoa (New Zealand). Her career path—evolving from medical school and individual clinical care to public health and eventually eco-health has been guided by the living world.

The Taieri River (Aotearoa): A river her family has returned to since the late 1800s, which taught her to view waterways as "teachers" of well-being.

The Nechako River (Canada): Meaning "Big River," this landscape further shaped her understanding of how human health is embedded in the environment.

The FIPHR Vision: From Arteries to Oceans

One of the most striking aspects of FIPHR's work is its immense scope. Dr. Parkes observed that the institute's research spans the entire spectrum of health:

- **Biomedical Roots:** Addressing critical issues like chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and mental health at the individual bodily level.
- **Ecological Connections:** Moving beyond a hierarchy to a "circular" way of thinking that sees humans as part of the ecosystem.
- **Planetary Scale:** Through initiatives like the Pacific Planetary Health Research Centre, FIPHR is scaling its impact from local villages and waterways to the entire Pacific and by extension, the planet.

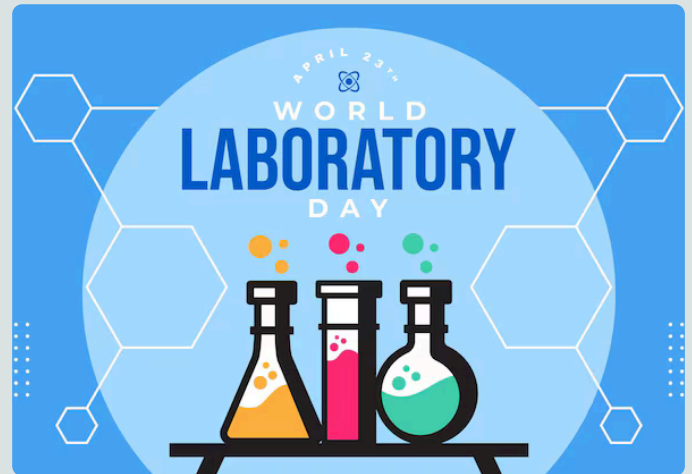
Seeing the Whole

Dr. Parkes praised the ongoing transformation within FIPHR, where researchers are being challenged to look beyond their specific projects to find "cross-cutting connections." She noted the overlap between her own 26 years of watershed research and Fiji's WISH (Watershed Interventions for Systems Health) project, illustrating how local water management is a vital key to broader community health.

By recognizing that "nothing is more important or less important" but that everything is connected, FIPHR is not just doing research, it is fostering a way of being that treats the living world as an extension of our own care.

“Dr. Parkes emphasizes a strength-based approach. She suggests that smaller, innovative hubs like FIPHR have a unique opportunity to "leapfrog" over traditional models, leading the way in areas where the rest of the world is still struggling to catch up”

IN APRIL



INSIGHTS is the monthly research newsletter of the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences of FNU, providing updates on research activities conducted by its staff, students and those under the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR)

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