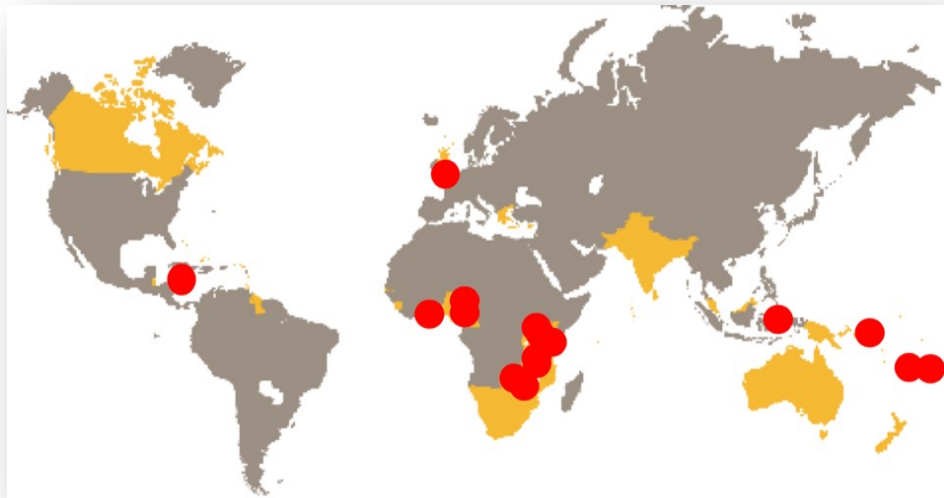


DR-NET Pacific Programme: challenges and overview of screening and treatment services in the islands

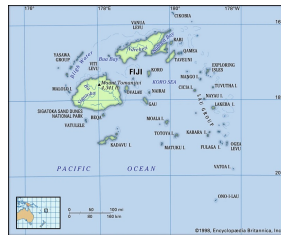
Rosamond Gilden, BBiomedSc, MOrth, MPH
DR-NET South Pacific Regional Coordinator

British Association of Retinal Screening (BARS) Conference
26 September 2024

Overview of presentation



(1) Diabetic Retinopathy Network (DR-NET)



(2) Work occurring in 4 Pacific countries



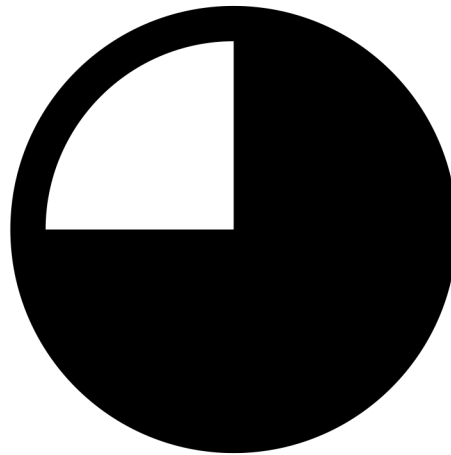
(3) DR screening and treatment challenges

Overview of diabetes and diabetic retinopathy

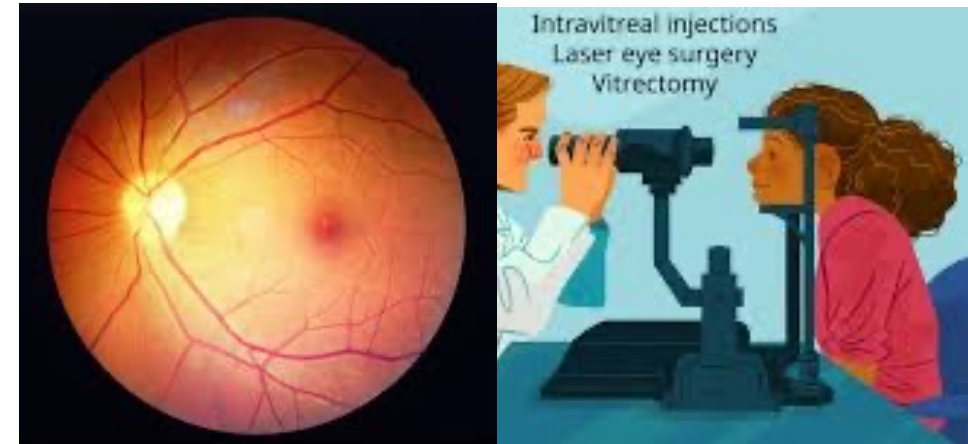
- Global prevalence of DR is 22.27% with 103 million adults worldwide with DR and just under 29 million adults worldwide with vision-threatening DR



425 million with diabetes



LMICs



Detect early, timely treatment

Diabetic Retinopathy Network (DR-NET)

- DR-NET formed in 2014
- Aim: build capacity in LMICs to establish integrated DR screening programmes
- Built on the foundations of the VISION 2020 LINKS Programme
- 36 DR screening partnerships – 17 countries in Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Pacific



Diabetic Retinopathy Network (DR-NET)

DR-NET focus areas are:

1. Establishing national frameworks and guidelines for DR services
2. Development of integrated DR screening and treatment services
3. Acquiring and maintaining essential technology and infrastructure for DR
4. Clinical skills training and knowledge exchange to develop multidisciplinary teamwork

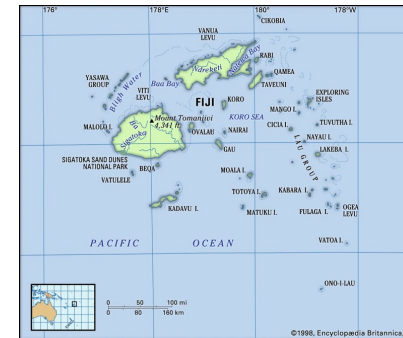
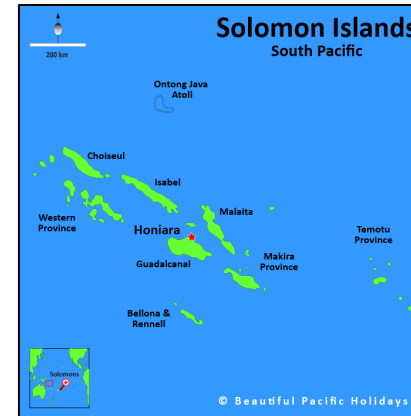
DR-NET South Pacific Regional Coordinator

- Commenced role in December 2021 (2 days per month)
- Funded by ANZEF
- Project: tackling unnecessary blindness from diabetic retinopathy in the South Pacific Islands
- Aim: deliver educational activities that will share knowledge and contribute to the development of DR services in the Pacific countries



DR-NET South Pacific Regional Coordinator

- Activities: capacity building, sharing of learning and data collection
- Online workshops and face-to-face training sessions
- Four countries



DR data	October		November		December		Subtotal		TOTAL
2024	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M+F
Gender (Male / Female)									
Number screened for DR									
Number of Laser Photocoagulation									
Number of Intravitreal injections									
Number of VR Surgeries									

Fiji

- Population over 900,000
- 330 islands
- Most of the population reside on the two largest islands – Vite Levu and Vanua Levu
- Pacific Eye Institute in Suva
- Mobile Eye Clinic – launched 2015



Fiji

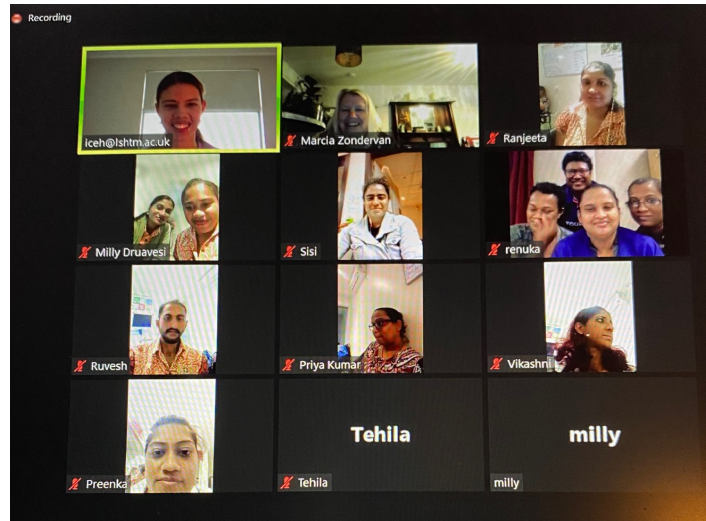
- Ophthalmologists
- Doctors
- Eye nurses / specialists

2023 highlights

- 3,919 DR screenings
- 1,683 DR treatments
- 70 outreach trips to remote communities



DR Refresher Sessions



Training: April 2022, July 2024 (virtual) and September 2022, August 2024 (face-to-face)

Participants: diabetes nurses, technician, diabetes clinical team leader, ophthalmologists, screeners and graders

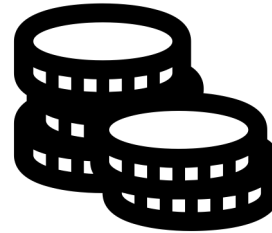
Challenges – DR Screening

- Training needs
- Patient accessibility
- Awareness and education
- Data management
- Servicing of retinal cameras
- Healthcare system integration

Challenges – DR treatment



Patient concerns



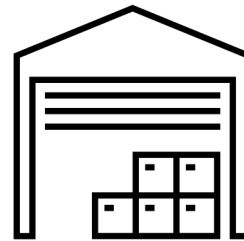
Cost



Equipment maintenance



Limited treatment options



Supply chain issues



Workforce shortages

Solomon Islands



- Population of ~700,000 people
- 900 islands
- Most of the population reside in rural villages
- Largest city is Honiara (80,000 people)
- Regional Eye Centre – 2015

Solomon Islands

- Ophthalmologists
- Doctors
- Eye nurses / specialists

2023 highlights

- 1,744 DR screenings
- 355 DR treatments
- 13 outreach trips to remote communities



DR Refresher Sessions



Training: February 2023, February 2024 (face-to-face)

Participants: diabetes screeners, diabetes eye nurses, OPD nurse, registrar, ophthalmologists

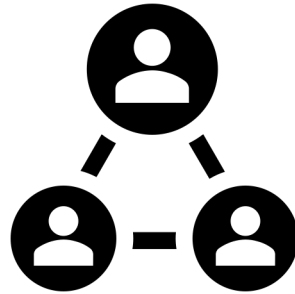
Challenges – DR Screening and treatment



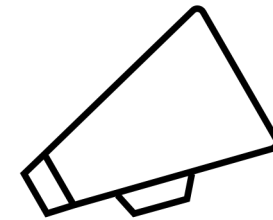
Geographical barriers



Funding constraints



Limited resources



Awareness

Samoa

- Population of ~200,000
- 10 islands
- Largest island is Upolu, home to 75% of the population



Samoa

- Ophthalmologist (one)
- Optometrist (one)
- Eye nurses
- Screeners



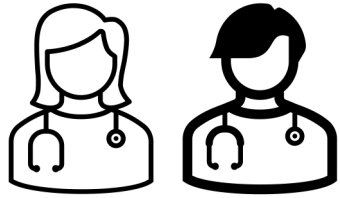
DR Refresher Sessions



Training: April 2023, April 2024 (face-to-face)

Participants: registered nurses, optometrist, registrar

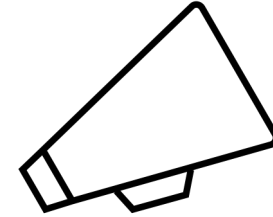
Challenges – DR Screening and treatment



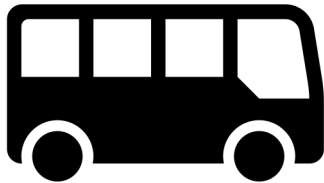
Human Resources



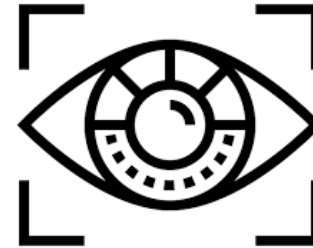
Funding support



Awareness



Transport



Equipment maintenance

Vanuatu



- Population ~ 300,000
- 83 islands
- 5 provinces
- Vanuatu National Eye Centre

Vanuatu

- Ophthalmologist (two)
- Eye nurses
- First Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness survey was completed in Vanuatu in 2024



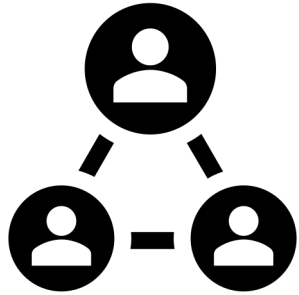
DR Refresher Sessions



Training: March 2024, September 2024 (face-to-face)

Participants: eye nurses, registered nurse, medical officer, ophthalmologist

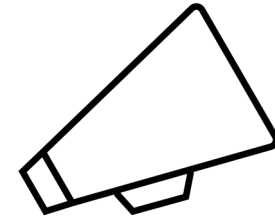
Challenges – DR Screening



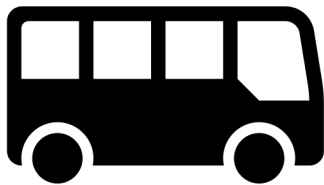
Limited resources



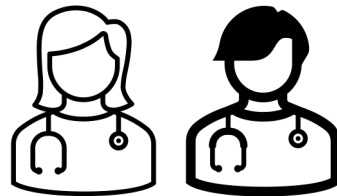
Funding support



Awareness



Transport

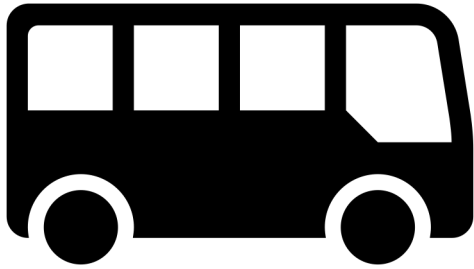


Human Resources

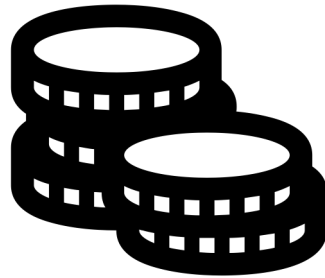


Clinic space

Challenges – DR treatment



Transport



Cost



Distance

Summary

- In the 3 years as DR-NET coordinator I have completed 10 training sessions in 4 countries
- Common challenges include:
 - Lack of awareness and education
 - Treatment cost
 - Human resources
- More resources required to support sustainable and locally owned DR services

Thank you!
rosamond.gilden@outlook.com