

Capacity expanded at all 5 Timor-Leste Referral Hospital Laboratories

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Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) has helped enhance healthcare services at all 5 referral hospitals in Timor-Leste through the successful implementation of microbiology laboratory services.

The referral hospitals are located in Baucau, Suai, Maliana, Maubisse and Oecusse. They now have new, high quality lab equipment. The equipment includes BD Bactec for blood culture testing, Olympus microscope, Biosafety Cabinet, incubator and autoclave, along with the ability to access results through a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

This expansion of microbiology services comes after several years of collaboration in Dili between Menzies, the Timor-Leste Government's Ministry of Health (MoH), National Health Laboratory (NHL) and the Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares (HNGV).

The implementation of this equipment has improved healthcare. Health staff can now electronically access blood test and culture results at a patient's bedside. This enhanced access allows quicker clinical care decisions informed by laboratory results.

Executive Director of the National Health Laboratory, Endang Soares da Silva, said there have been several benefits from the expanding the microbiology service. She said it has increased access to microbiology diagnostics and decreased late referrals, delayed or incorrect treatment.

"The introduction of LIMS at the referral hospitals facilitates clinicians with timely reporting of laboratory results, hence, patients are able to access treatment rapidly, resulting in better health outcomes."

Menzies played a key role in supporting the procurement and installation of microbiology equipment, providing training, and assisting with sample collection and testing. This also included encouraging clinicians to utilise the tests available as well as access results through the LIMS.

Co-lead of Menzies Timor-Leste projects, Associate Professor Josh Francis, said that the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Health on this capacity building project arises from the commitment from the Government to tackle the problem of antibiotic resistance, and to improve the quality of care available for Timorese patients.

"What has been achieved is remarkable. Timor-Leste has rapidly gone from having very limited capacity for microbiological diagnosis, to having state of the art technology functioning in each referral hospital, that enables highly trained Ministry of Health staff to carry out accurate testing for bacterial infections and for antibiotic resistance. We have seen evidence of lives that have been saved through these developments, and it is exciting to be a small part of it, and to see the leadership from Ministry of Health staff in making it happen."

This work has been made possible through financial aid by the Fleming Fund Country Grant to Timor-Leste. The grant supports testing and surveillance for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and antimicrobial use (AMU) in human health and animal health through a One Health approach.

The Fleming Fund is a UK aid program managed by the UK's Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC). The Country Grant to Timor-Leste, awarded to Menzies, is managed by the Management Agent, Mott MacDonald.

Find out more about our work in Timor-Leste by visiting our website:

https://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Global_and_Tropical_Health/Timor-Leste/ENDS

Media contact:

In Timor-Leste: Fausta da Costa, Communications Officer,

Phone: +670 7738 1210 | Email: fausta.dacosta@menzies.edu.au

In Australia, contact: media@menzies.edu.au

Menzies School of Health Research:

Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses. Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Picture credit: Menzies School of Health Research



Caption: The laboratory director from Maubisse referral hospital explaining the process for using and maintaining the new Bactec machine, which is used for blood culture testing.