

The Second PMBA Conference, Republic of Palau: *Healthy Island Styles - E Kau?*

VICTOR YANO, M.D. *

Cheselsel Akltareng

O...Demala Soi...lang

Ko Rull Me Ngak...A Desoml,

Ma Mlida Dio...Muubang,

Komdai Er Ngii...Ma You Keep Our Canoe Together And

Lemowaise Komem...Tengel,

El Me Oserchii A Renguk...

Lometikl, Lometkelekl E You Are There to Pacify The Heart

Railkolk I...lang

Chanted by Techur/Translated by Kathy Kesolei

A Praise for Friendship

O...Dear Friend

You Are The Bridge And

I Am The Outrigger,

Chart Our Course,

As Dawn Breaks,

That Is Restless, Restless of Darkness

The Pacific Basin Medical Association (PMBA), which was formed in April 1995, held its Second Annual Conference in Koror, Republic of Palau, from May 13 - 15, 1996. The theme of the conference - "Healthy Island Styles - E Kau?" - emphasized the preventive and health promotive strategies of Health for All 2000 and reflected the Yanuca Island Declaration (March 1995) initiatives of New Horizons and Healthy Islands. The Palauan question - "EKau?/What about you?" - underscores our responsibility for maintaining and improving our own health. This Second PBMA Conference, sponsored by the Belau Medical Society and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Palau (ROP), was attended by over eighty physicians, nurses, and other health related professionals throughout the Pacific and Rim Countries.

The meeting opened with a traditional Palauan chant - "Cheselsel A Kilterang" - by Techur, a traditional Palauan healer. It praised the bond of friendship using the analogy of the stability of the bridge between the outrigger and the canoe to "keep our canoe together and chart our course".

* President, Pacific Basin Medical Association, Belau Medical Clinic, P.O. Box 822, Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

The Conference Keynote Address was delivered by Palau Minister of Health, the Honorable Masao Ueda, who emphasized the traditional healthy lifestyles of Pacific Islanders and our need to "reassess, reevaluate, and synthesize our traditional values of care and wholesomeness as we merge them with the modern medical approaches to promote wellness and health among our peoples".

One of the highlights of the Conference was the presentation - "Healthy Lifestyle - A Historical Perspective" - by Dr. Takeo Wada, Ex-President of Sapporo Medical University, who from 1941-1942 was a first assistant-surgeon serving with the Japanese naval air force in Palau and Yap. In his paper Dr. Wada reviewed both the health status of his Pacific patients during this period and then addressed the health and medical status in Japan from 1950 to 1990.

Dr. Wesley Youngberg, a Clinical Preventionist from the Seventh Day Adventist Clinic on Guam, in his theme setting

"Hippocrates today would advise Pacific Islanders: "Return to the foods and activities of your forefathers and you will be healed of the illnesses that cause early death and decrease abilities in the later years of your life". "

Healthy Lifestyles presentation challenged the conference participants to embrace a life style that would bring patients hope of improved health but also re-connect them with the strength and wisdom of their ancestors. In keeping with Hippocrates' admonition: "Let foods be your medicine and medicine be your foods", Dr. Youngberg predicted that Hippocrates today would advise Pacific Islanders: "Return to the foods and activities of your forefathers and you will be healed of the illnesses that cause early death and decrease abilities in the later years of your life". Dr. Youngberg then went on to discuss "Preventing Diabetes on Guam: Guidelines for Screening and Early Detection".

Thereafter, over the next three days, followed five interactive sessions concerning healthy lifestyle issues which addressed nutritional problems, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, STDs, and practical strategies promoting well-being, including a presentation on "Traditional Medicine" by the Director of Palau's Department of Natural Resources and Development.

In sponsoring the meeting, it was the goal of the Belau Medical Society and the Palau Ministry of Health to have Pacific health professionals present and discuss Pacific life style diseases and issues. Most of the session moderators and presenters were Pacific physicians from the Republics of Palau and the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, American Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga. Participants included presenters from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Tripler Army Medical Center, the Philippines, the Suva Office of the WHO, and from medical schools in Hawaii, Fiji, Auckland, Pohnpei, and Sapporo.

The topics were clearly Pacific-oriented and addressed "Diabetes in the Marshall Islands", "Vitamin A Deficiency in Chuuk", "Obesity in American Samoa", "Stroke", "A Hypertension Clinic in Pohnpei", "Treatment of Early Endstage Renal Disease in Yap", "Myocardial Infarctions in Palau", "The Overall Burden of Life Style Diseases in the Pacific", "Diabetes Screening in Pohnpei", "Sexual Risk Behavior in the Marshall Islands", "Eye Complications of Diabetes", "Foot Care in Palau", "STDs in the Pacific", "The Sex Industry and AIDS in the Mariana Islands", "Chlamydia on Guam", "Breast Feeding", "Traditional Medicine in Palau", "Tobacco in Palau", "Alcohol in Yap", and "The QUIT Program in Australia".

Special presentations also included lectures on Tripler Army Medical Center's Pacific Health Care Program and an update of the new postgraduate training programs at the Fiji School of Medicine. Discussion regarding postgraduate training in Fiji included spirited dialogue concerning the compelling need to provide Diploma and Masters training opportunities in Family Practice and Community Health which are not included, as of yet, among the current hospital-based programs that are now offered or being planned at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, in rural Fiji, or in the region. At the end of the Conference, continuing medical education credits (10 hours) were awarded to meeting participants by the PMBA and the Belau Medical Society.

During the PBMA business meetings the membership adopted the draft by-laws and voted to make the *Pacific Health Dialog* the formal journal for the PBMA. On the final meeting day, the President of the Palau Senate, the Honorable Peter L. Sugiyama, and the Senate Vice President, the Honorable Haruo H. Esang (now President of the Association of Pacific Islander Legislators), awarded Palau National Congress Joint

House and Senate Resolutions of recognition and appreciation to PBMA members Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, Professor of Medicine, University of Hawaii, Dr. Donald Persons, Chief of Pediatrics, Tripler Army Medical Center, and Director of Tripler's Pacific Island Referral Program, and Dr. Greg Dever, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Director, PBMOTP, for their service to the people of Palau and the Pacific.

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At the close of the meeting, Dr. Ianser Edward, President of the Pohnpei State Medical Association, stated that his organization would sponsor the next PBMA meeting scheduled for December 12 and 13, 1996, just before the last graduation of the Pacific Basin Medical Officers Training Program on December 14th. Dr. Edward promises "A Potpourri of CME Delights". For more information contact the PBMOTP Secretariat, P.O. Box 1298, Kolonia, Pohnpei, FSM

96941 (Phone: 691-320-2328/Fax: 691-320-2305).

The Second PMBA Conference was a memorable meeting. Never before had such an impressive gathering of Pacific physicians and health professionals come together and address such important Pacific health issues. It was a blessing and a comfort to establish and re-establish the bridges of knowledge and friendship that help "keep our canoe together and chart our course..." - E Kau! □

