

# Dever

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

## The Imi Ho'ola Program

Much has been written in the *Pacific Health Dialog* and other sources about the physician workforce development in the Pacific.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> In this issue on the "Health of Native Hawaiians", Dr. Benjamin Young's "A History of Imi Ho'ola" reviews a 30 year history of health workforce training and development at the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).

Dr. Young, a former Assistant Dean and the first psychiatrist of Hawaiian ancestry, directed the "special opportunities" educational programs at JABSOM which targeted bright native Hawaiians and other Pacific students in efforts to attain ethnic equity among the physician workforce of Hawaii and the U.S. Associated Pacific Islands (USAPI) of Micronesia and American Samoa. Through the leadership of charter JABSOM Dean Windsor Cutting and then Dean Terence Rogers, two initiatives – the Imi Ho'ola and Dean's Guest / Kulia Programs – were established. Imi Ho'ola ("to seek to heal") was a rigorous one year pre-medical school program which prepared university graduates to be competitive for acceptance into metropolitan medical schools. Once formally accepted into the University of Hawaii (UH) medical school, select students were then streamed into the Dean's Guest then renamed the Kulia Program ("strive to reach the summit") which provided an expanded curriculum of special tutorials in order to help medical students succeed academically.

Important to note in this effort has been the ongoing support of the Hawaii Congressional Delegation, especially that of U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, who were very successful in marshalling U.S. federal funds to promote health workforce training for both native Hawaiians and Pacificans.

In 1967, when JABSOM started, there were only 10 physicians of native Hawaiian ancestry. Thirty years later, through both its regular and special programs, 139 native Hawaiian physicians have graduated from JABSOM – most of whom are now working in the Hawaiian islands. Of these, more than 50 are Imi graduates. Many of these Imi-JABSOM graduates have distinguished themselves including two who went on to become Chairpersons of the JABSOM Departments of Psychiatry and Family Practice.

During the same period, JABSOM graduated 32 physicians from Micronesia and American Samoa, 31 of whom were

also Imi graduates. However, of these, in spite of all JABSOM's efforts to promote "community glue", only about one third of the Imi-JABSOM graduates have returned to their home islands to practice medicine. JABSOM, like other metropolitan medical schools, has not escaped the thorny problem of how to encourage its graduates to return to their remote "physician shortage" islands instead of enjoying the benefits of larger salaries in Hawaii or California.

One of the ways JABSOM got around this "brain drain" problem was to establish the Pacific Basin Medical Officers Training Program (PBMOTP) in Pohnpei which, linked with the new undergraduate and postgraduate changes at the Fiji School of Medicine, has innovatively addressed the indigent physician shortage problem among select Pacific countries. Seventy PBMOTP graduate physicians are now working in Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, the Marshall Islands, and American Samoa. Additionally two PBMOTP transfer students went on to graduate from the Fiji School of Medicine.

On closer look one can better appreciate the great impact the Imi Ho'ola Program has had in the Pacific. Of the 294 Hawaiians and other Pacific minority students who completed this program, 166 were accepted to JABSOM of which 123 successfully graduated as physicians as of July 1998. Of the Imi graduates who did not go on to complete physician studies from JABSOM, 19 were accepted by other medical schools in the U.S. (1) and throughout the Pacific (18) in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, and Pohnpei. An additional 28 Imi graduates entered other health-related graduate schools in public health (24), nursing, osteopathy, and dentistry. And another 10 Imi graduates were accepted into other non-health related graduate schools in law, teaching, and psychology. Although they have not been tracked, it is believed that most of these Imi graduates are working in Hawaii and the USAPI.

Another JABSOM initiative during the 1980s – Health Careers for Pacific Islanders – was also responsible for mainstreaming many Hawaiian and other Pacific students into health-related undergraduate and postgraduate training programs in nursing, public health, medical technology, and medicine. An individual example was Mary Figir from Yap, who through the Health Careers Program, attained her Masters in Public Health and became the Yap State Director of Health. There she has implemented a health system which WHO has characterized as a model for primary health care for the Western Pacific.

Before Dr. Young left the Dean's office, he passed the "special opportunities" programs baton to Dr. Nanette Judd, another Hawaiian with extensive nursing experience in Micronesia. Dr. Judd, who also has an article in this issue ("Laaupau: herbal healing among contemporary Hawaiian

*Cont'd on previous page ...*

# Finau

PHD EDITOR

## PHD matters

Welcome to the tenth issue of PHD in the last five years. We have come a long way since the inaugural issue in March 1994. We still have a long way to go to put dialogue into PHD. We need letters to the editor and commentaries on the content. You may do this through the PHD Website <[www.resourcebooks.co.nz/phd/phd.htm](http://www.resourcebooks.co.nz/phd/phd.htm)> or a letter to the editor. Please let me know how we can move forward into the next century with the new technologies. This will probably come up in the SPC Telehealth Conference (31 November – 3 December 1998, Noumea, New Caledonia).

This issue sees the second of the ethnic specific issues. JoAnn Tsark and her colleagues are congratulated here for bringing forth the "Health of Native Hawai'ians" Also included are papers about other people, which raises the similar issues pertinent to the Native Hawai'ians. The Diaz advise on Mongolians and the Australian champions of the "Healthy Islands" urges me on to wonder why indigenous populations of the experts countries still suffer dismal health states. How can they try to wash other faces when they have not washed the sleep from their own eyes?

The creation of the Pacific Health Research Council (PHRC) is another effort for Pacific peoples to wash the sleep from

their eyes. The PHRC Editor Dr John Adams is most heartily welcomed to the PHD editorial committee. John and the PHRC executives brings with them private sector entrepreneurial enthusiasm and Pacific regional commitment. We need dialogue and sustenance for PHRC. We look forward to support for this Pacific empowering initiative from everyone. There is a need for an opportunity for Pacific peoples to develop structures from their own perspectives and not keep buying into expatriate consultant driven models. It will be interesting if Pacificans are paid expatriate privileges by the donors to work on Pacific initiatives.

We still need country editors to organise ethnic specific issues. The PHD issue on Tongans, New Zealand Maori, Samoans and Niueans are slowly taking form. Papers, contributions and labourers of love are urgently needed. Please let me know if you want to help. You may start by telling more of your friends about PHD past and future issues. Financial or other contributions of any amount and kind will force the editors to enjoy Christmas!!

Dr Gregory Dever spent a week here in Auckland. Besides other things, he helped with this PHD issue. If any other members of Editorial Committee have the time, this kind of support will be most appreciated. Everyone who wants to help will be accommodated. So please declare your desire to work on PHD, a Pacific initiative, and you will be justly rewarded.

As this is the last PHD issue of 1998 let me, on behalf of the editorial committee, wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's make PHD matter towards the Year 2000!! □

FROM THE EDITOR

Ehu ahiahi.

**Evening twilight.**

Old age. 'Ōlelo No'eau #295