



# Opportunities for Tele-education in the Pacific

## The Pacific Open Learning Health Net (POLHN)

U-21 E-Health Workshop  
Hong Kong - 25 September 2007



## Overview

- Focus on nations with the greatest need
  - Assist in support for infrastructure improvements
  - Develop and deliver continuing education
  - Provide access to digital resources




## Overview

- Characteristics of Pacific Island countries
  - Rural islands separated by vast distances (33 million square km)
  - High telecommunications costs
  - Unreliable power
  - Lack of IT access and support
    - Senior officials have email or web access – most health professionals do not
    - Many government networks allow email but limited web access
  - Varying levels of eHealth capacity
  - Migration of trained health professionals




## Need for Continuing Education

- In the South Pacific
  - 7000 health professionals in region
  - 75% have no access to continuing education
- In Fiji
  - 54% have never had any continuing education
  - 98% believe continuing education will increase competency
  - 99% believe level of continuing education must be increased
  - 90% believe lack of continuing education is resulting in poor health service





## Response to Need

- Pacific Open Learning Health Net (POLHN)
  - Purpose: Use open and self directed learning modalities to
    - Increased access to online resources
    - Connect health workers to continuing education
    - Quickly disseminate information of importance



## POLHN Learning Centres



- IT Infrastructure
  - Internet access
  - 4-20 computers, server, printer
- Training materials
  - Resources and reference materials
    - CD, Web, Print
    - Blue trunk library
    - Supercourse
  - Self directed learning material
  - Courses



## POLHN Learning Centres



- Cook Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia (4)
- Fiji (2)
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands (2)
- Nauru
- Palau
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tonga
- Vanuatu
- Tuvalu





## POLHN Courses

- Types of courses
  - Hybrid (face to face and online)
  - Online Instructor Led
  - Asynchronous Courses (no instructor)



# POLHN Courses

- Course Credit
  - Undergraduate degree credit
  - Post graduate degree credit
  - Continuing education credit
  - Non-credit courses



# Advantages to eLearning

- Geographic
  - Reach participants where they work
- Economic
- Professional
  - Just in time
  - Asynchronous
  - Additional support for f2f meetings





## POLHN Course Development


- Stages of Development
  1. Needs Assessment
  2. Collection of materials
  3. Preliminary Design
  4. Formative Evaluation and Pilot testing
  5. Production of final versions
    - CD, web and print
  6. Delivery of online courses



## POLHN Course Development


- Needs and desires of stake holders
- Environment
- Telcom Infrastructure
- Funding
- Challenges






## Lessons Learned

- Online/CD hybrid works well even where students have limited Internet access
- POLHN sites need to be convenient for students
- Courses need to be well designed
- Instructor/tutor reminders need to be posted at least weekly
- In project based learning courses, students were highly motivated.
- Project based approach resulted in students creating materials for use in their communities
- Online courses built local capacity



## Lessons Learned

- Online learning works in the Pacific
  1. Over 1000 participants -500 in the past two years
  2. More effort needs to be focused on providing local support and building local capacity to develop and deliver online courses
  3. Theoretical components of many courses can be delivered on line







# Long Term Plans



- Goals and Objectives
  - Governance Structure
  - Regional Continuing Professional Education
  - Country Task Forces
  - Online courses and other resources
  - Funding
  - Capacity Building



# Long Term Plans



Modify POLHN web site into a portal site

- Link to current courses/programs appropriate for Pacific health workers
- Develop a database of courses appropriate for the Pacific


## Long Term Plans



- Develop and deliver courses and resources
  - Implement pilot project to digitize BTL and other resources and put them on solar powered PDAs for use in remote islands
  - Partner other regional organizations to integrate online courses into HRD where appropriate


## Long Term Plans

- POLHN provides a platform for
  - connecting health workers
  - continuous online training
  - disseminating information
  - mentoring
  - supporting participants before and after f2f training sessions




## Funding Required

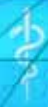
- US \$9 million over five years to
  - Maintain and expand the network
  - Improve bandwidth
  - Hire local coordinators to provide support for students
  - Build capacity at FSMed, NUS, and other institutions to develop and deliver courses
  - Develop and deliver additional for-credit courses
  - Establish a regional continuing education credit program



## POLHN Web Sites

- Website
  - [www.polhn.org](http://www.polhn.org)  
Information on course and links to other resources
- Contact  
Pacific Open Learning Health Net  
[polhn@sp.wpro.who.int](mailto:polhn@sp.wpro.who.int)





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