



PSRH

Newsletter

February 2025



PSRH Webinar Premature Infants and Breastfeeding

**Join Annette Wright
RN, RM, IBCLC**

20th February 2025

Click the link below to register

5pm AU (AEST)

6pm AU (ADST)

5pm Port Moresby

6pm Vanuatu

7pm Fiji,

8pm NZ, Tonga 8pm Samoa

[Click here to REGISTER for the Free Webinar](#)

Certificates of attendance will be emailed once your evaluation is submitted



Profile: Moananu Dr. Karaponi Okesene-Gafa

PSRH Board Member

Career Journey and Current Role

Dr. Karaponi Okesene-Gafa's journey is a testament to perseverance, passion, and dedication to women's health, particularly in the Pacific.

Tertiary Education:

- 1992: Graduated with a primary medical degree (MBChB) from the University of Otago.
- 1994: Completed a Diploma in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Auckland.
- 2002: Achieved Fellowship of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (FRANZCOG) after completing specialist training.
- 2022: Graduated with a PhD in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Clinical and Academic Roles

Dr. Okesene-Gafa has served as an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Middlemore Hospital since completing her FRANZCOG training. Middlemore Hospital is an accredited training facility, where she has contributed significantly to the training of future specialists. In 2013, she began an academic career as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland. In this role, she balances teaching, research, and service commitments. Her PhD research, the Healthy Mums and Babies (HUMBA) trial, explored dietary interventions for pregnant women with obesity to prevent excessive weight gain, earning recognition as one of the University of Auckland's best theses in 2022. In April 2024, she was appointed Head of the Pacific Health Section at the University of Auckland, where she continues to advocate for Pacific health and well-being.

PSRH Roles and Contributions

Dr. Okesene-Gafa's journey with the Pacific Society for Reproductive Health (PSRH)

began in 2015 when she was elected as a general board member.

Over the years, she has taken on increasingly significant roles:

- 2017: Elected Vice President at the PSRH Conference in Vanuatu.
- 2020: Served as Acting Head of Secretariat while continuing as Vice President during a critical transitional period for PSRH.
- 2022: Elected President at the PSRH Conference in Samoa.
- 2025: Continues to serve as Ex-Officio President, supporting the organization in any capacity where possible.

Her leadership was pivotal during a challenging period when PSRH navigated transitions in leadership. Despite limited resources, she worked tirelessly to stabilize the organization and maintain its financial health.

Major Challenges and How She Overcame Them

Balancing her responsibilities with PSRH, her academic and clinical roles, and family life was one of the most demanding periods of her career. Completing her PhD during this time required immense perseverance and faith. She credits her success to the unwavering support of her family, colleagues, and supervisors, as well as her faith in God. Dr. Okesene-Gafa emphasizes the importance of community, describing her journey as one supported by many in her waka (canoe) and those cheering from the sidelines.

Vision for Reproductive Health in the Pacific

Dr. Okesene-Gafa hopes to see women's health prioritized by governments and leaders across the Pacific region. She envisions the elimination of cervical cancer and a reduction in endometrial cancer rates through targeted programs addressing obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). She is passionate about PSRH's mission to equip healthcare workers with the skills and tools to improve women's health outcomes. "Without women, there are no populations, and no continuation of Pacific people," she says. Dr. Karaponi Okesene-Gafa continues to inspire and lead through her unwavering commitment to advancing reproductive health and improving health outcomes for women in the Pacific.



SIMULATION FOR MIDWIFERY INNOVATION LEARNING AND EDUCATION (SMILE)

SMILE

The Burnet Institute's "Pacific SMILE" (Simulation for Midwifery Innovation Learning and Education) project is dedicated to enhancing midwifery education in Pacific Island countries by establishing simulation laboratories in collaboration with educational institutions across six nations—Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Kiribati, and Samoa. These labs provide controlled, realistic environments for midwifery students to practice their skills, addressing challenges like limited equipment and lack of practice spaces in current programs.

The curriculum provided will be the Pacific Emergency Maternal and Neonatal Training (PEMNeT) programme, a specialised emergency obstetric training program supported by the Pacific Society for Reproductive Health (PSRH). Both the PEMNeT and SMILE teams are working collaboratively to ensure the delivery of high-quality, sustainable education and training for midwifery students, nursing and medical trainees, and professionals engaged in emergency maternal and neonatal care.



The Pacific SMILE project, building upon UNFPA's curricular updates, commenced in 2024 with the establishment of the first simulation lab in Samoa. This was accompanied by a successful conference, advancing midwifery education and regional collaboration. The project aims to strengthen the midwifery workforce by establishing simulation labs in all participating countries by 2025, improving maternal and newborn health outcomes



For more information, please contact caroline.homer@burnet.edu.au.





Save the date

**PSRH CONFERENCE
14 - 18 SEPT
2026**





**COMING
SOON...**

**PSRH is launching a
new website soon
stay tuned!**



Contact the secretariat team:

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- Head of Secretariat, amanda.noovao-hill@psrh.org.nz

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