

**WHO Western Pacific Regional Committee Meeting, Nadi, Fiji 20-24 October  
and  
Asia-Pacific ECO Care Conference: Advancing Equity &  
Climate-Resilient Surgical Systems, Suva, Fiji 27-31 October**

The WHO Western Pacific Regional Committee convened in Nadi, Fiji, for its annual meeting, bringing together representatives from 38 member states and territories. The gathering began with a traditional Fijian welcome ceremony led by the Fijian Prime Minister, The Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka, alongside WHO Regional Director Dr. Saia Piukala, a surgeon by training.

**Expansion of Regional Representation**

A significant milestone was the formal inclusion of Indonesia into the WHO Western Pacific Region (WPRO), expanding the region's representation to encompass approximately one-quarter of the global population. This development marks a strategic enhancement in regional health collaboration and policy alignment.

**Broad Health Agenda with Surgical Focus**

The committee addressed a wide array of pressing health issues, including:

- The impact of climate change on public health
- A recent surge in HIV cases in Fiji
- The integration of artificial intelligence in healthcare delivery
- Rising mental health challenges across the region

Of particular relevance to the neurosurgical community was a dedicated session on Safe Surgery, which reviewed regional progress in improving surgical access and quality. The session highlighted initiatives such as the Operative Encounter Registry, aimed at strengthening surgical data collection and outcomes monitoring.

**Neurosurgical Advocacy and World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (WFNS)**

A notable achievement was the successful advocacy by representatives of the WFNS. Their efforts culminated in Indonesia publicly supporting a proposed resolution to recognize Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) as a notifiable condition—a critical step toward improving surveillance, resource allocation, and care pathways for TBI patients.

Four WFNS-affiliated neurosurgeons participated in the meeting, including distinguished neurosurgeons Dr. Gail Rosseau and Dr. Asra Al Fauzi. Dr. Al Fauzi's presence was especially significant given his close ties to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, facilitating high-level engagement and support for neurosurgical priorities.

From October 27-31 the Pacific Island Surgeons Association (PISA), in collaboration with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and the G4 Alliance, convened the Asia-Pacific Emergency, Critical, and Operative (ECO) Care Conference in Suva, Fiji. Themed *"From Risk to Resilience: Health System Sustainability in an Era of Climate Change"* the conference brought together clinicians - nurses, policymakers, and advocates - to strengthen ECO care across the Pacific region.

The week commenced with the first in-person PISA meeting since 2018, inaugurated by Fijian Health Minister Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu and WHO Regional Director Dr. Saia

Piukala. Surgeons from six Pacific nations shared progress on National Surgical, Obstetric, and Anaesthesia Plans (NSOAPs), highlighting persistent challenges in accessing safe, timely, and affordable surgical care. Discussions addressed the burden of non-communicable diseases—particularly diabetes—and explored strategies for workforce development, task-sharing, and promoting gender equity in surgical training. A standout session, “Breaking the Scalpel Ceiling,” shed light on the systemic and cultural barriers faced by women in surgery.

A central theme of the conference was the integration of ECO care into broader health systems, aligned with WHO’s post-pandemic frameworks. Given that 62% of Pacific health facilities are located within 500 metres of the coastline, the urgency of building climate-resilient surgical systems was underscored. Professors Eugenie Kayak and Forbes McGain, both practicing anaesthetists, presented on the environmental impact of surgical and anaesthesia care and proposed practical mitigation strategies.

Interactive breakout sessions focused on climate adaptation, health system strengthening using the WHO building blocks, and innovative financing mechanisms. Contributions from the World Bank, Indonesia’s Ministry of Health, Harvard PGSSC, and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) enriched the dialogue on sustainable investment in ECO care.

Two key sessions led by the G4 Alliance were particularly relevant to the neurosurgical community:

- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Advocacy:** This session emphasized the disproportionate burden of TBI in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and advocated for its inclusion as a notifiable condition in a future World Health Assembly Resolution. Such recognition would enable systematic data collection, and the development of comprehensive action plans spanning prevention, acute care, and rehabilitation.
- **Data to Quality Improvement:** This initiative promoted the adoption of a minimum dataset for operative encounters to support quality improvement and advocacy efforts. Scaling this approach across LMICs is a critical step for evidence-based surgical system strengthening.

A key outcome of the conference will be the development of a consensus statement, currently being formulated through a Delphi process. The statement is expected to affirm a shared commitment to equitable, climate-smart ECO systems. Guiding principles will likely include sustainability and resilience, data-driven quality improvement, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Strategic priorities span policy advocacy, green infrastructure, capacity building, research, equitable supply chains, and inclusive governance. Notably, the statement is anticipated to call for the integration of ECO care into national health policies and emphasize the inclusion of nurses and allied health professionals in policy development and authorship.

Special recognition was given to Dr. Rajeev Patel, newly elected PISA President, and outgoing President Prof Ifereimi Waqainabete. RACS was proudly represented by President Prof Owen Ung and Vice-President Prof Ray Sacks along with the G4 Alliance Board Chair, Dr Gail Rosseau, President of the Permanent Council, Dr. Neil Wetzig and other G4 Alliance luminaries.

The conference underscored the power of advocacy and regional collaboration, calling for a shift from siloed efforts to integrated, context-specific solutions.

Some photos from the conferences:





