

Living proof

Face to face with proof of our value

From our selfless volunteers to our generous donors, we simply could not have the impact we are having without your support.

I recently sat in a village in the hills of Timor-Leste with one of our penicillin patients Dionezio and his mum. Our work with your support is literally keeping Dionezio alive. I could only look at his mum and smile. As a parent, I know the time and love we put into our kids. It was great to sit face to face with the living proof of the difference we are making together.

To maximise our impact, leading clinician and researcher Dr Josh Francis recently joined us as our honorary rheumatic heart disease (RHD) adviser. Dr Francis led our landmark study into RHD, recently published in the Medical

Journal of Australia, which showed that Timor-Leste has some of the world's highest rates of RHD. One in 28 school children, and one in 20 girls, are affected.

We continue to work hard with professional volunteers like Dr Francis and the government of Timor-Leste to ensure a brighter future for Dionezio and other young people with RHD. In recent weeks we have seen the global health community unite behind a shared vision of ending the tragedy of RHD (details page 4).

As you can see, our work has never been more important. As we approach tax time I encourage you to give to support good heart health for our neighbours and friends in Timor-Leste.

Until next time,

– Stuart Thomson
Chief executive officer

‘Excellent outcomes’

Medical roundup with Dr Noel Bayley

We're well into this year's treatment program.

So far this year we have had excellent outcomes with Paulo, Jose, Marquita and Natalino; and last month Domingas had a successful mitral balloon procedure. We have three more patients scheduled soon: Marcelina for an ASD ("hole in the heart") repair; Olga for a mitral balloon; and Jose for a mitral valve repair.

I'll keep you posted – we anticipate excellent outcomes for all three.

We're gearing up for our June clinic. Dr Louise Creati and I will be the adult cardiologists and I am delighted to say that Dr Ari Horton will once again provide paediatric expertise.

Biomedical engineer Gordon Szegi will also be part of the team – while we attend to the patients, he'll be carrying out vital equipment repairs.

We intend two visits to the districts, one to Suai on the south coast, and the other to Baucau in the east.

We expect five days of clinics, all look to be very busy indeed. We'll bring you some updates via social media – if time permits!

– Dr Noel Bayley
Honorary medical adviser

For Nelsia, and all the broken hearts



Three-year-old Nelsia is one of 10 children who received life-saving heart surgery as part of our Operation GoodHearts surgical mission earlier this year. With her heart condition

fixed, she can now run and play. Most importantly, her family knows that Nelsia's cheeky smile will be a feature in their lives for many years to come.

In Timor-Leste there are so many children and young people whose lives are limited by poor heart health. Some, like Nelsia, are born with heart defects.



Others contract childhood infections that cause rheumatic heart disease.

East Timor Hearts Fund is the only medical organisation dedicated to providing life-saving heart surgery and heart-health research, prevention and education projects in Timor-Leste, where one in 28 people, and one in 20 girls, has rheumatic heart disease.

With your help, we can mend these broken hearts. And through our preventative health and education programs we even have a chance to stop them breaking in the first place.

That's why we're asking supporters to make a tax time donation before 30 June.



Donate today at
easttimorheartsfund.org.au

Three minutes with... Dr Ari Horton

Paediatric cardiology fellow



How did you become involved?

As a paediatric cardiac specialist, I was asked to join the volunteer medical team in 2017 to improve the capacity for care of children and education of local staff and families. Since participating in my first screening visit to Timor-Leste in 2017 I have become passionate about this work and have visited Timor-Leste numerous times. It has been eye-opening to see the vast health differences between Australia and its neighbour, as well as the absolute spirit, determination and joy of the Timorese people.

What does your role entail?

I look after the heart health of children up to 18 years old. I specialise in congenital and inherited heart disease for all ages, as well as having a specific interest in rheumatic heart disease. I'm involved in clinical research, the penicillin program and follow-up of rheumatic heart disease patients. I firmly believe in education, capacity building, empowerment and collaboration with local services and I enjoy supporting local teams to further develop their skills.

What do you do in your spare time?

I am a keen photographer and like capturing unique moments and people. I am obsessed with good food and good coffee.

Read Ari's full profile on our website.

'I feel much better now and I feel happy'

New heart and new hope for Domingas



Young mum Domingas returned home with a new heart and new hope for a healthy life after her mitral balloon procedure last month. "I feel much better now, and I feel happy," she told us.

"I am looking forward to seeing my baby and family," Domingas told us before flying out. Our volunteer medical team will be in Dili this month and will continue to monitor Domingas's recovery. Our sincere thanks to Dr Simon Eggleton and Eastern Heart Clinic and Prince of Wales Private Hospital in Sydney, for their life-changing work.

Join in the fun!

On Sunday 29 June Team Mending Broken Hearts will once again be part of **Run Melbourne**. Rally your colleagues, family and friends and join us for the scenic 5km walk, the 10km fun run or the half marathon.

On Friday 12 October we're holding our second annual **Swing into Action to Mend a Broken Heart** golf day at beautiful Sanctuary Lakes. Limited places and great sponsorship packages are still available. **Please go to our website for full details on both events.**

Making heart health history

Like many in the international heart health community, we rejoiced last month when the 71st World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, unanimously adopted a resolution calling for a coordinated global response to end rheumatic heart disease (RHD) world-wide.

This was an historic decision – the first time that RHD has been recognised as a global health priority on the world stage.

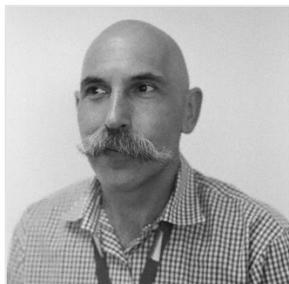
It was also a proud moment for the government of Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste's government representatives made a speech in front of the world in support of the resolution, reaffirming the government's commitment to taking action on RHD. This commitment included the announcement in April by the Timor-Leste Ministério da Saúde (Ministry of Health) to partner with organisations including East Timor Hearts Fund and the World Health Organisation to develop and RHD action plan by the end of the year.

The government of Timor-Leste's renewed focus on RHD follows the release in April of our landmark rheumatic heart disease prevalence study, which showed that Timor-Leste has amongst the world's highest rates of this treatable, preventable condition.

East Timor Hearts Fund looks forward to working with our friends the Ministry of Health, and our partners in Timor-Leste, to help put an end to the rheumatic heart disease in Timor-Leste. In the meantime, we continue to partner on preventative health and education initiatives, such as our penicillin program, and to identify and offer surgery for the most critical cases.

Mending gear so we can mend hearts

East Timor Hearts Fund has supported the establishment of Timor-Leste's first cardiac care ward at Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares, with a



significant donation of specialist equipment, courtesy of our great friends Cardioscan.

Our volunteer biomedical engineer Gordon Szegi ensures that the equipment remains in good working order so that East Timor Hearts Fund and its partners can continue to deliver quality care to heart patients.

Gordon accompanied our volunteer medical team to Dili 15 months ago to assemble and set up the equipment at Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares. This month he will make a return visit, to do a check up on the donated patient monitors, ECG machines and diagnostic cardiac ultrasound units.

Maintaining sensitive medical equipment in a humid tropical environment is a test of resourcefulness, but Gordon is well prepared for the challenge.

"Working in a regional hospital in country Victoria, in Australia, there's the expectation to try and get most devices up and running yourself, with phone support from the supplier. So it's useful to have an understanding of how a device is to perform on a patient," Gordon says. "A background in electronics and being able to problem solve on the spot definitely helps as well."

Please go to our website to read Gordon's profile, and keep an eye on our blog and social media channels for updates on his work in Dili.

Taking one for the team



Walking 135km across mountains is one of the more unusual duties I've been called on to undertake as chair of the board of East Timor Hearts Fund. But I love a challenge, so next month I'll once again don boots and backpack for the Trans-Timor Trek.

The inaugural event last year was an incredible experience, even for someone who has visited Timor-Leste numerous times and travelled to some of its most inaccessible beauty spots. The sunrise from the 2986 metre Mt Ramelau is all the more spectacular when you've travelled there on foot, carrying a 20-kilo backpack.

The trip is not just a holiday jaunt; its goal is to raise awareness of heart health issues in Timor-Leste, where one in 28 school children, and one in 20 girls, has treatable, preventable, rheumatic heart disease.

We also aim to raise \$20,000 to help mend one of those broken hearts.

Please go to our website and follow the links to the trek fundraising page to sponsor any of the six hardy souls who are putting their bodies on the line for heart health in Timor-Leste. And please – wish me luck!

– Ingrid Svendsen