

Saved: The Millennial Reflects

Nostalgia isn't quite the right word to describe it. Being at the Port Moresby General Hospital brings up a cacophony of feelings. When I was 12 I was diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease. I spent 7 months in the children's ward of the POMGEN undergoing treatment (***The start of many sick spells in which I was in and out of the children's ward of POM Gen.***). 2 months in, and I contracted extra-pulmonary Tuberculosis, that is TB around my heart. MAKING IT LOOK LIKE A WATER BALLOON! I KID YOU NOT!

Largely unaware of the new disease killing me, the doctors at POMGEN assessed that I wasn't getting better when I should have been. So began a flurry of testing to determine what new nasty had made its home in my body. One X-ray later and they had found the killer.

On Wednesday May 6th, I was at Port Moresby General Hospital again. Not for my monthly check up or being sick but to witness something special. The inauguration of the new containerized X-ray at the Joseph Bana-Koiri TB clinic. To quote my boss, Dr Ann, my job was to: "Go be a part of something that helped saved you and is going to help save others. Don't cry either, there's enough emotions even when you aren't emotional."

I won't lie, I got emotional.

The CEO of POM Gen, Dr. Molumi, noted that the radiology equipment at POM Gen is over 60 years old. Day in, day out the X-ray machines are over worked. Serving NCD and the Central province POM Gen provides the only public radiology service with only two days a week designated for TB screening for children. 600 X-ray's a week for TB.

Knowing those numbers, I feel like the X-ray I had, to confirm if I had TB, is now as valuable as gold! How they managed even from when I was in the hospital in 2012 is astounding. How they have managed to cope with the equipment they have now, notably over worked and still inundated with orders, is ASTOUNDING.

If you could see my face now typing this, I'd look what you call: MIND BLOWN. Like... seriously... I can't even comprehend... like...WOW!

Dr. Dakulala **(SIDE NOTE: THIS GUY IS AMAZING)** noted that since 2014 partners have been engaged to end MDR and XDR TB. "TB is finally on its way to being controlled in NCD." He said, to which everyone applauded. With a cure rate of beyond 86% and lost to follow up rate below 6% and an 89% treatment success rate the future seems bright and TB free.

Whilst seated in the front row, listening to the other speeches, I had the sudden urge to turn around. Like one of those gut feelings that tell you to do something even though you don't know why. I turned around. Low and behold I was looking at my old doctor, Dr Anga. She didn't recognise me, I don't blame her, I'm not 12 anymore, I'm 20 and notably more facial hair.

I approached Dr Anga after the speeches at the ribbon cutting and reintroduced myself. Her expression was exactly as you'd suspect. Like seeing a kid you used to know all grown up.

I asked her how things have changed, how the X-ray would help. She expressed how POMGEN was struggling and early case finding is crucial in children who have TB. The new X-ray to serve TB patients will lighten the load and help test children in the wards and those coming from clinics quicker.

A conversation with Dr Dakulala added insight on the plans for the future to have mobile testing vans to go into communities in the NCD. Helping early case finding in the efforts to end TB.

This all gives me hope and makes me thankful. Thankful I didn't die, thankful that those machines were still kicking, hopeful for the kids that have or will contract TB, hopeful that with the work being done kids won't have to worry about TB.

This is what makes POMGEN great. The people. The staff that work tirelessly in the effort to save lives across all spectrums not matter how worn out they or the equipment may be. Now, they're getting help. Their getting the upgrades they need to end TB.

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