

EqualMed donates \$1.1M in medical supplies to support Fiji's health system

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Diabetes Fiji has received over 100 advanced blood glucose monitors from the US-based charity EqualMed to support children and youth with Type 1 diabetes in Fiji, as part of a larger \$1.1 million medical supply donation set to arrive in the country next month.

Speaking on behalf of EqualMed founder Dr. Nivita Sharma, her father and Board Chair, Professor Divesh Sharma says the organization is preparing to ship a full 40-foot container of medical supplies to support hospitals and clinics across the country, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

He says EqualMed was founded in 2013 by his daughter at the age of 16, inspired by a personal loss and a desire to help improve healthcare access in the Pacific.

Professor Sharma says since then, the organisation has sent annual shipments of medical aid to Fiji, working closely with the Ministry of Health, Fiji Pharmaceutical & Biomedical Services, and their in-country representative, Selvin Prasad.

He says they receive wish-lists from health centres around the country and attempt to provide whatever they can with the help of donations.

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Professor Sharma highlighted the importance of bridging the gap in access to healthcare, especially in remote areas such as Malolo Island, Taveuni, and the Lau Group, which have benefited from EqualMed's efforts over the years.

He says that in some clinics, nurses didn't even have a stethoscope, while others ran out of basic scissors or had to ask patients to bring their own pillows and blankets when admitted.

He adds that these are not luxuries — they are necessities for dignified and effective care.

Professor Sharma says that during the COVID-19 pandemic, EqualMed also shipped two 40-foot containers filled with personal protective equipment when it was scarce globally.

The container scheduled to arrive in August includes essential items such as manual blood pressure machines for areas without electricity, wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, special diabetic boots, stretchers, pillows, blankets and medical bedding, sterilisation equipment, CPR kits, oxygen masks, IV sets, wound dressings, catheters, stethoscopes, thermometers, sutures, ultrasound gel, scissors, forceps, and even hard-to-source items like Yonka suction tips.

Professor Sharma says many of the items are earmarked for remote health posts and hospitals that have made specific requests to EqualMed due to ongoing shortages.

He also made a public plea for greater support within Fiji to help transport and distribute the supplies once they arrive.

He says that getting these supplies to outer islands and remote villages is costly and logistically difficult, and is asking organisations to come forward to help deliver these necessary supplies to the people who need them most.

Diabetes Fiji Executive Director Marama Kini says they are grateful for the generous donation of blood glucose monitors and continued support from EqualMed over the years.

He says that the monitors are not just devices but tools of hope and empowerment that will enable self-monitoring and better management of the disease.

He adds that they will be distributed to patients in all divisions, with priority given to those who are financially disadvantaged.

Assistant Minister for Health Penioni Ravunawa says this is a very noble cause, and the Ministry is grateful for donations such as this, which assist countless people across the country.

He says these donations fill in the gaps that are currently lacking within the Ministry.

Link: <https://www.fijivillage.com/news/EqualMed-donates-11M-in-medical-supplies-to-support-Fijis-health-system-f8x4r5/>