

EXPLAIN THE SCIENCE - 8 **In the English Language**

A Panel Discussion and Q&A on the COVID-19 Vaccine in Fiji

Date: Thursday July 1 | Time: 1pm-2pm

As Fiji battles the second wave of the COVID-19 infection, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services has also strengthened its efforts in the roll-out of the Astrazeneca (AZ) vaccination programme across the country. However, discussions across social media tell us that most of us in Fiji still have many questions about the AZ vaccine, the COVID test and the science behind them, given that there are endless sources of information that our people are referring to.

In this special recap session, the Head of the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR) at the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS) Dr Donald Wilson reviews the Facts and Key Lessons from the First Four Panel Discussions regarding COVID-19 and the AZ vaccine.



Dr Aruna Devi

Panelist

Aruna is Assistant Professor and former HOD of the Department of Pathology & Medical Laboratory Science at College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences. She is also the coordinator of BMLS programme accreditation. She convenes and coordinates BMLS Year 4 courses, Research Projects and Professional Practice. After attaining her Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathology) from Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia, she was awarded an Australian Leadership scholarship to pursue her Master of Laboratory Medicine at RMIT University in Melbourne, Majoring in Clinical Haematology. Dr Devi was awarded Charles Sturt University COMPACT scholarship to pursue her PhD at the Charles Sturt University, NSW, Australia. Her research thesis was on Epidemiology and Characterisation of antibiotic-resistant *Campylobacter* spp in Fiji and NSW, Australia. She has published papers on her work and has been awarded FNU SEED grant to conduct research on Biofertilizer. She worked in MOHMS pathology laboratories for 9 years before pursuing her career in academia.



Mr Atlesh Nand

Panelist

Atlesh is presently lecturing in Molecular Biology and Genetics at CMNHS. He is a lead researcher in Molecular and Genetic sequencing research on HIV 1 strain in collaboration with University of Otago as part of his qualification upgrade. Mr Nand in partnership with two other collaborators, pursuing mutually interesting and beneficial research on SARS-CoV-2 surveillance study in Fiji. This study is again in collaboration with University of Otago. He was a key member and played an integral part in the roll-out of the confirmatory HIV testing algorithm which was a UNICEF funded project in Fiji. Mr Nand demonstrates enthusiasm and depth of interest in research studies on human health.



Mr Adriu Sepeti

Panelist

Adriu is currently lecturing in Transfusion Medicine at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Medical Sciences. He attained his Bachelor in Medical Laboratory Science from the Fiji School of Medicine, and is currently pursuing his Masters of Management of Transfusion Medicine from the University of Groningen, Netherlands. His research interest is on the Impact of vaccination on the safety of blood supply. Currently he is the president of the Fiji Institute of Medical Laboratory Scientist, and Interim Chairman of the Fiji Allied Health Management Board.



Ms Taina Naivalu

Panelist

Taina is a Lecturer in Microbiology and Immunology at the College of Medicine, Nursing and Medical Sciences where she is the Head of Department of Pathology and Medical Science. After attaining her Bachelor in Medical Laboratory Science from the Fiji School of Medicine, she pursued a Master of Science in Medicine (Infection & Immunity) at the University of Sydney. She also has a Master of Science Biology (thesis) from the University of the South Pacific where her research focus was on Arboviruses. Last month, with 2 other collaborators won an OGHF funding to pursue a research in Fiji on surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater. She has 20 years of experience working in Medical Laboratories in Fiji including the Fiji CDC.



Dr Donald Wilson

Host

Donald is an epidemiologist and a public health physician by background. He is currently the Associate Dean Research and Director of the Fiji Institute of Pacific Health Research (FIPHR) for the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) at FNU.

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