

# PROJECT FEEDBACK



## Training and support for Nurses and Outreach Workers in the US Affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPIs)

### Pacific Island TB Controllers Association (PITCA) Conference

Building on the commitment ARC has demonstrated over the past thirteen years to developing the skills, knowledge and capacity of TB Programs within the Pacific, the ARC Nurse Consultants Group travelled to Palau to deliver training for nurses and outreach workers from the TB Programs of the northern Pacific. The training was delivered as part of the PITCA Conference, held in Palau from the 9th to the 13th September, 2019.

Participants from the National TB Programs of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau attended the training activity. Amanda Christensen and Kerrie Shaw coordinated and delivered the training on behalf of ARC.



*Nurses and Outreach Workers from the Northern Pacific TB Programs attending the PITCA training activity*

The annual training activity is undertaken as a collaboration between ARC, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States TB Centers of Excellence. ARC would like to acknowledge the funding grant provided by the CDC to support the work of ARC in providing specialist training, technical assistance, clinical support and the development of educational resources for nurses and outreach workers working within the northern Pacific. Building the capacity and skill levels for the health care workers within these programs is important in the fight to eliminate TB.

Within the USAPIs sputum quality remains an ongoing issue, the ability to diagnose TB, ensure that the correct drugs are used and to evaluate and monitor patients' progress to cure relates directly to the ability to collect good quality sputum specimens. This year, the PITCA program for the nurses and outreach workers focused on a range of factors that relate to improving sputum specimen quality. Nurses and outreach workers have an important role in collecting sputum specimens, developing skills, knowledge and

competencies in specimen collection is seen as an important program activity.

The program featured a blended learning format to maximise the potential for learning from technical specialists, discussion and sharing of experiences with the aim of identifying local strategies and solutions to improve sputum quality. Participants were able through role play activities to demonstrate sputum collection techniques and patient education strategies to obtain good quality sputum specimens. The Sputum Toolkit developed by ARC in collaboration with the USAPI TB Nurses Network was evaluated during the conference. Valuable feedback was obtained from the participants that has been incorporated into the toolkit resources.

A notable highlight of working in the Pacific is the enthusiasm and willingness that the participants have for attending training activities, learning new skills and sharing their experiences.

### Pacific Island TB Nurses Network (PITBNN)

The PITBNN continued to meet in 2019, each month, nurses, outreach workers and TB program staff from the USAPIs meet by video conferencing to present cases, discuss clinical issues and undertake educational activities. The monthly meetings are coordinated by ARC and hosted by the CDC. Each of the countries within the USAPIs actively participate in the meetings and present cases for clinical discussion and review. The ARC Nurse Consultants Group provide ongoing technical support, educational activities and mentoring for the Nurses and outreach workers of the USAPIs TB Programs.

### TB Sputum Toolkit

The ARC Nurse Consultants Group has been working with the PITBNN to evaluate current practice in specimen collection, handling and processing, reviewing existing policies, guidelines and resources and identifying challenges relating to sputum specimen collection.



*Flipchart*

To improve the quality of specimens collected and promote best practice a set of resources and tools have been developed. The resources form a comprehensive toolkit that encompass policy and practice guidelines, competency standards and clinical skill