



3<sup>rd</sup> Vanuatu Health Research Symposium  
26-28 October 2022  
Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu

## An Infection Prevention and Control Perspective of COVID -19 Outbreak Response at Vila Central Hospital, Vanuatu

Graham Tasso<sup>1</sup>, Philippe Guyant<sup>2</sup>, Philip Agwaiasi Okia<sup>1</sup>, Jennifer Hummelshoj<sup>1</sup>, Gilson Fangaria<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vila Central Hospital, Port Vila, Vanuatu. <sup>2</sup>World Health Organization, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

### Abstract

**Background:** The COVID-19 cases presenting and hospitalized at Vila Central Hospital (VCH) from March to April 2022 not only challenged disease control and emergency management practices, but also impacted the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) program at VCH. The role of the IPC unit is to support delivery of healthcare services by reducing transmission of COVID-19 within VCH, including surveillance and guidance on transmission-based precautions, isolation practices, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other IPC measures.

**Methods:** To understand the strengths and challenges of the COVID-19 response from an IPC perspective, an Intra Action Review (IAR) of the response to COVID -19 outbreak was conducted by the IPC unit at VCH. An IAR meeting was held in June 2022 with all Nursing In Charge of VCH and the IPC unit. An IAR is "a qualitative review of actions undertaken so far to respond to an ongoing emergency as a means of identifying gaps, lessons and best practices in order to improve the response plan" (World Health Organization, 2020). Three key questions addressed are: what went well?; what did not go well?; and, how could this be improved?

**Results:** Best practices identified by the IAR were: clear direction from the Emergency Operation Centre, strong operational teamwork within VCH and provision of training for VCH staff on correct use of PPE, managing COVID-19 patients and use of new equipment from surge support. Challenges identified were that nurses, doctors, and cleaners were over-worked and some were infected with COVID-19, increasing pressure on remaining staff. Furthermore, some hospital infrastructure did not meet the required IPC standard.

**Discussion:** There is a need to strengthen staff training on IPC practices. Hospital wards need to be designed to meet IPC isolation standards for any future outbreak.