



## **Navigating Cyclones and Crises: A cross-sectional observation on Mental Health Screening at nursing triage using K-10 post TC Judy & TC Kevin.**

Dr Jimmy Obed<sup>1</sup>, Mr Craig Sionetuato<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vila Central Hospital, Port Vila, Vanuatu. <sup>2</sup>Pasifika Medical Association Group, Auckland, New Zealand

### **Abstract text**

**Background:** After the devastating twin cyclones in Vanuatu in March 1st and 3rd 2023, understanding the mental health of survivors became paramount. The Kessler-10 (K-10) tool, designed to measure psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety and depression, was the readily available tool for this purpose. The K-10 was administered at the nursing triage for everyone that accessed medical care. The PMAG's multi-disciplinary Pacific Medical Assistance Team (PACMAT) and the MindCare Team were dispatched to Aniwa and Futuna to provide medical and mental health and psychosocial assistance.

**Methods:** Of the 418 patients who went through nursing triage for mental health screening, 84% (aged 16 years and above) underwent the K-10 screening. To cater to language barriers, the tool was also translated into Bislama. Local health professionals assisted in its administration, ensuring clarity and comprehension.

**Results:** The data revealed that 74% of participants scored below 20, suggesting mild distress. Conversely, a significant 26% scored above 25, indicating a higher degree of psychological distress, and were referred for in-depth review by a mental health nurse or psychiatrist.

**Discussion:** The substantial number of individuals with scores above 25 emphasizes the profound psychological impact of the cyclones. These individuals were immediately referred for more comprehensive evaluations. Mental health screening is a vital component of health screening during disaster medical responses. The absence of baseline data and subsequent studies points to areas of refinement in future disaster mental health strategies.