

NCKU Alumnus Dr. Paul Bosawai Popora Opens First Standard Clinic in the Solomon Islands

NCKU Press Center

Located 5,000 kilometers away from Taiwan, the Solomon Islands is one of Taiwan's few diplomatic allies. The 35-year-long exclusive friendship between both island nations is embodied in Dr. Paul Bosawai Popora, a graduate of National Cheng Kung University's (NCKU) College of Medicine. After receiving his bachelor's degree in July 2014, Popora returned to his home in the Solomon Islands to serve as the country's sole professionally trained doctor. In 2017, Popora took the first step towards realizing his dream vocation by starting his own clinical practice.



Dr. Popora's clinic is located on Guadalcanal, the principal island of the Solomon, and is the first standard medical building in the country. The building was built by civil engineering high school students who, under the guidance of Dr. Popora and the assistance of textbooks on architectural design, completed the construction within two years. Dr. Popora hopes that one day he can build a hospital replete with various medical departments, including emergency rooms, general surgery, gynecology, obstetrics, and pediatrics. It is his hope that these resources would benefit the community by improving the quality of medical treatment. Dr. Popora's hopes and aspirations for the betterment of his community all started with his study at National Cheng Kung University.

The path to success is strewn with obstacles: "The only thing you must not do is give up!"

In 2004, Popora received a scholarship from the Taiwanese government and arrived in Taiwan to begin his studies, which required that he first learn Mandarin Chinese. Initially, the language was completely alien to him. Coupled with an intense case of homesickness, Popora wanted to return home immediately. However, after struggling through eight difficult months, he was ultimately admitted into National Cheng Kung University's College of Medicine in 2005. His first year was a trying one. The issues he had in his classes were mounting. He was ready to throw in the towel, and wrote to the college dean Ruey-Jen Sung: "I give up. I want to go home."

Dean Sung immediately called Popora in to talk to him face to face to try to dissuade him from leaving: "The only thing you must not do is give up!". With dean's encouragement, Popora was able to adjust his mindset. Setting his eyes on his goal of becoming a doctor, Popora forged ahead and faced all sorts of challenges head-on.

During his internship at NCKU Hospital, Popora became determined to reach his goal:

"When I was working at NCKU Hospital, I witnessed many doctors, nurses, and volunteers' selfless efforts and contributions. I knew I had to bring this medical technology back to my country." Initially, patients were unaccustomed to his skin color and accented Chinese, but they were moved after witnessing Popora's diligence and commitment. Popora left a deep impression on Ming-Fei Liu, a physician in the hospital's department of internal medicine: "Popora was always open to engaging in discussions with others and learning from those exchanges. Moreover, the medical records he recorded were detailed and substantial. He was also kind towards his patients and received praise from all around."

Moved by the acts of selflessness within the NCKU Hospital, Popora sets his heart on becoming a doctor

In July 2014, Popora received his bachelor's degree from NCKU's College of Medicine. In the following month,

Dr. Popora returned to his country to work at a clinic at GPPOL, the company that sponsored his studies in Taiwan. At GPPOL's clinic, he treated 2,500 patients free of charge on a monthly basis. Due to the grossly underdeveloped healthcare industry in the Solomon Islands, Dr. Popora was the island's sole physician, so he had to see patients across all departments in the clinic. This was reminiscent of his internship days in the NCKU Hospital. Nevertheless, Dr. Popora was spurred by his experiences working at the NCKU Hospital, and began promoting a volunteer program that centered on bettering the community through community development, healthcare, and education.

In order to stimulate community development, Dr. Popora pushed for a community revenue plan where 10% of the revenue would go into a community improvement fund. He donated half of his salary into to fund a village development project of improving the community's water source. Dr. Popora continued to offer his medical services at the Good Samaritan Hospital which had no physician. In addition, he would go to the Ghaobata Community Elementary School every Sunday to teach mathematics to the students there, hoping that these efforts would help students continue their studies.

Four years after returning home, Dr. Popora maintains close contact with his NCKU teachers and classmates. He says that he has never once forgotten about his experiences in Taiwan, and is immensely grateful to his professors, advisors, and the workers at the NCKU Hospital. Dr. Popora hopes that he can one day return to his alma mater and continue his studies in external medicine. "You must remember that I am also an NCKU ambassador in the Solomon Islands."

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