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## Press Release

### FNU's Physiotherapy students devote time to assist public

**Suva, Fiji.** A group of students enrolled in the Bachelor in Physiotherapy programme at the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) are undertaking a week-long training on handling disability patients in conjunction with the Spinal Injury Association (SIA).

The program involves assessing the SIA members, providing them with training and demonstrating on how to use wheelchairs. At the end of the training, the 21 SIA members will receive free wheelchairs which are donated by an organisation based in Australia.

Lecturer in Physiotherapy, Shofeen Begum said the workshop is a win-win situation for both the students and patients.

"Students are able to do their practical and also prescribe a wheelchair to each of the recipients. These wheelchairs which are donated by a non-government organization – Motivation Australia is very costly. One wheelchair costs around \$2,800 (FJD) and most of these recipients would have had difficulty in purchasing it for themselves," said Begum.

"To provide a wheel chair, first we need to know what the client actually needs. The wheelchair needs to be appropriate in terms of the measurement and the home environment condition," added Begum.

Begum said following the training, the wheelchair recipients are now able to adjust to their wheelchairs themselves and move freely.

"Today, they have been given the wheelchairs. So tomorrow, since most of the recipients are based in Suva, our students will be visiting them at their home to see if they need any assistance," mentioned Begum.

Final year Bachelor of Physiotherapy student Marylene Kumar said the workshop was beneficial for her as she was able to put theory into practice.

"We will enter into workforce very soon. We will also be going to hospitals and doing community based rehabilitation, so it is a good learning opportunity because we have learnt some skills which will be helpful in the future," said Kumar.

58-year-old Pauliasi Mateboto who has spinal cord injury and is unable to walk, said he is grateful to the students for their hard work.

"I can't describe how happy I am today. I had been waiting for a wheelchair since I was discharged from the hospital. This has been more than a year now. I am thankful that the long wait is now over," said Mateboto.

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**About the Fiji National University:** The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).