

World-first musculoskeletal health survey module piloted in Solomon Islands

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Honiara, Solomon Islands – In a world-first, a module about low back pain, arthritis and other musculoskeletal health problems is being piloted in the Solomon Islands national Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) this month.

The musculoskeletal survey module has been developed by the Global Alliance for Musculoskeletal Health and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

The DHS survey, through which the pilot is occurring, is part of an extensive *Pacific Household Survey Programme*, coordinated by SPC Statistics for Development Division with support from Australia and the Asian Development Bank.

Common musculoskeletal problems include back pain, osteoporosis and arthritis which may cause significant pain, disability and seriously affect people's health and well-being.

"Solomon Islands Government is pleased to have the musculoskeletal module piloted as part of our 2015 DHS survey questionnaire," the Director of the Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey 2015, National Statistics Office, Irene Kalauma, said.

"The indicators that this module will give us, should form a firm basis of how best we can deal with or address these musculoskeletal problems, and we hope also to inform the work of other governments around the world," Mrs Kalauma added.

The Solomon Islands' survey is implemented by the National Statistics Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, and with technical support from SPC's Statistics for Development and Public Health Divisions.

"Musculoskeletal problems are one of the greatest contributors to the global burden of disease, but very limited information is currently available in the Pacific region," said Dr Damian Hoy, co-deputy chair of the Global Musculoskeletal Alliance surveillance taskforce and surveillance specialist at SPC's Public Health Division.

"Given the impact that poor musculoskeletal health has on people's livelihoods, it's important to develop a clear picture of the situation in the region and internationally, and SPC welcomes being part of this global pilot," Dr Hoy said.

The musculoskeletal module includes eight questions strategically oriented on people's bones, muscles and joints, the three key areas of musculoskeletal problems

A great strength of this module is that it can simply be added to existing health surveys rather than creating a specific stand-alone musculoskeletal health survey, Dr Hoy said.

Training on the musculoskeletal questions and the overall demographic and health survey was provided to the 14 teams deployed to do the fieldwork, beginning last week, with technical support from SPC's Statistics for Development Division .

The first results of the Solomon Islands' survey are due to be available by March 2016.

The Global Alliance for Musculoskeletal Health will use the results of the pilot to further refine the module for use in other countries throughout the world.

To learn more about musculoskeletal health, consult: <http://bjdonline.org/about-musculoskeletal-conditions/>.