

Abstract
After the Samoan Tsunami

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On Tuesday 29th September at 06:48 am a magnitude 8.0 Earthquake struck off the coast of Samoa, triggering a large Tsunami that affected the low lying villages on the south eastern coast of Upolu. It left 129 dead and a similar number required hospitalisation for injuries. Within 24 hours Australia had an acute surgical team in Samoa to assist with the management of the injured. Four days later I arrived in Samoa as part of a New Zealand Surgical team to continue the surgical relief effort. My role rapidly expanded beyond anaesthesia to a liaison role between the New Zealand medical teams, the Samoan health system, the Australian emergency response team and the New Zealand government officials.

Prior to our leaving New Zealand there was a lot of concern about the delay in getting a New Zealand medical team to Samoa. On reflection the rapid response of the Australian teams followed by ongoing support from New Zealand was an excellent model for this disaster.

While managing the aftermath of any disaster has certain common elements, each disaster will have its own unique logistical, communication and personnel problems. My presentation will focus on my personal experience of volunteering and assisting in the relief effort.