



Fiji Regional Telehealth Project

Odille Chang¹, Brigid Ryan²

1. College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Fiji National University, Suva 2. International Unit, St. Vincent's Mental Health Hospital, Melbourne

Introduction

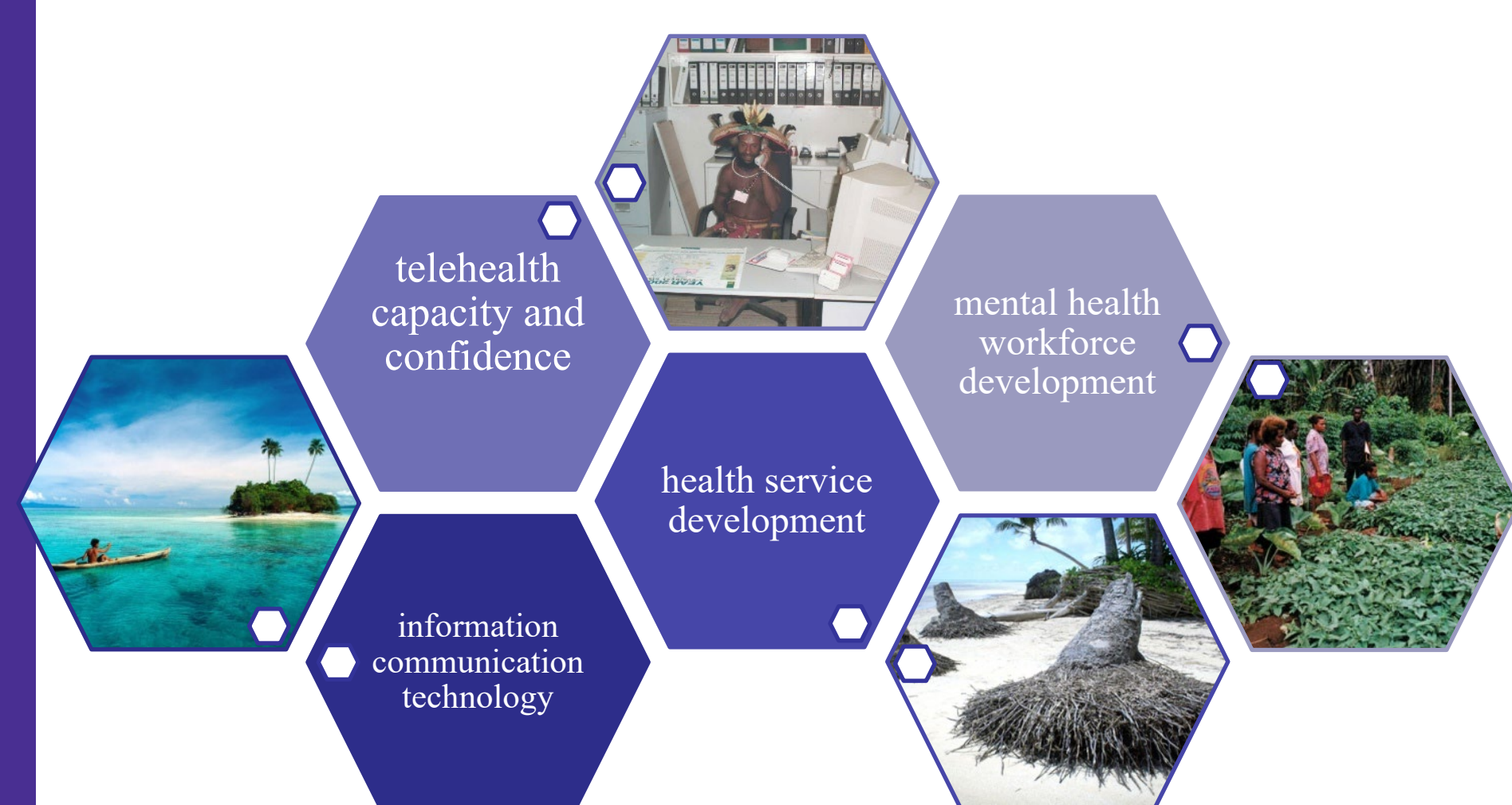
Conceptualised in March 2020 as a response to COVID 19, this project aimed to promote telehealth engagement aligned with the COVID-19 response for physical and social distancing. Telehealth was considered a valuable option for health-related disaster responses, and rural and remote health services, but had not been commonly used or promoted in Fiji mental health services.

In partnership with St. Vincent's Pacific Health Fund, the Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) established ICT for telehealth mental health services provided at the university, and through the Fiji Ministry of Health public mental health services.

Aim

Technology and support for MOH sites were allocated, with strategic planning with clinical leaders for initiating telehealth services. Online professional development was offered for clinicians to engage with telehealth platforms and access peer support.

To build confidence and digital literacy skills, FNU and MOH staff engaged in education; direct patient care through clinical reviews, consults and integrating with other health teams; and ongoing professional development and training for mental health workers in Fiji and the region.



Results

Over 140 clinicians registered from Fiji, Solomon Islands, PNG, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, as well as clinicians from Australia and the World Health Organization.



Launch of the Project at St. Giles Hospital, Suva

Over 25 sessions, Pacific Island health workers were invited to professional development, with topics suggested by mental health workers meeting across the oceans and time zones. An average of 30 people attended each session, achieving an equivalent of 745 hours of Continuing Professional Development.

Participants reflected that the sessions contributed to their own confidence and access to telehealth, and noted the value of intra-professional, international collaborations and peer exchanges.

"Useful to the current situation. Additionally allow sharing of information across countries in which would not have happened if this platform is not available."

Participants were able to build confidence in using telehealth, and communicating with international colleagues. They described value in sharing professional development interests, and contributing to new initiatives that can assist them in their own workplaces.

"More hands on skills - basic skills such as the MI session. More of that, than fact sharing."

Fiji Regional Telehealth participants

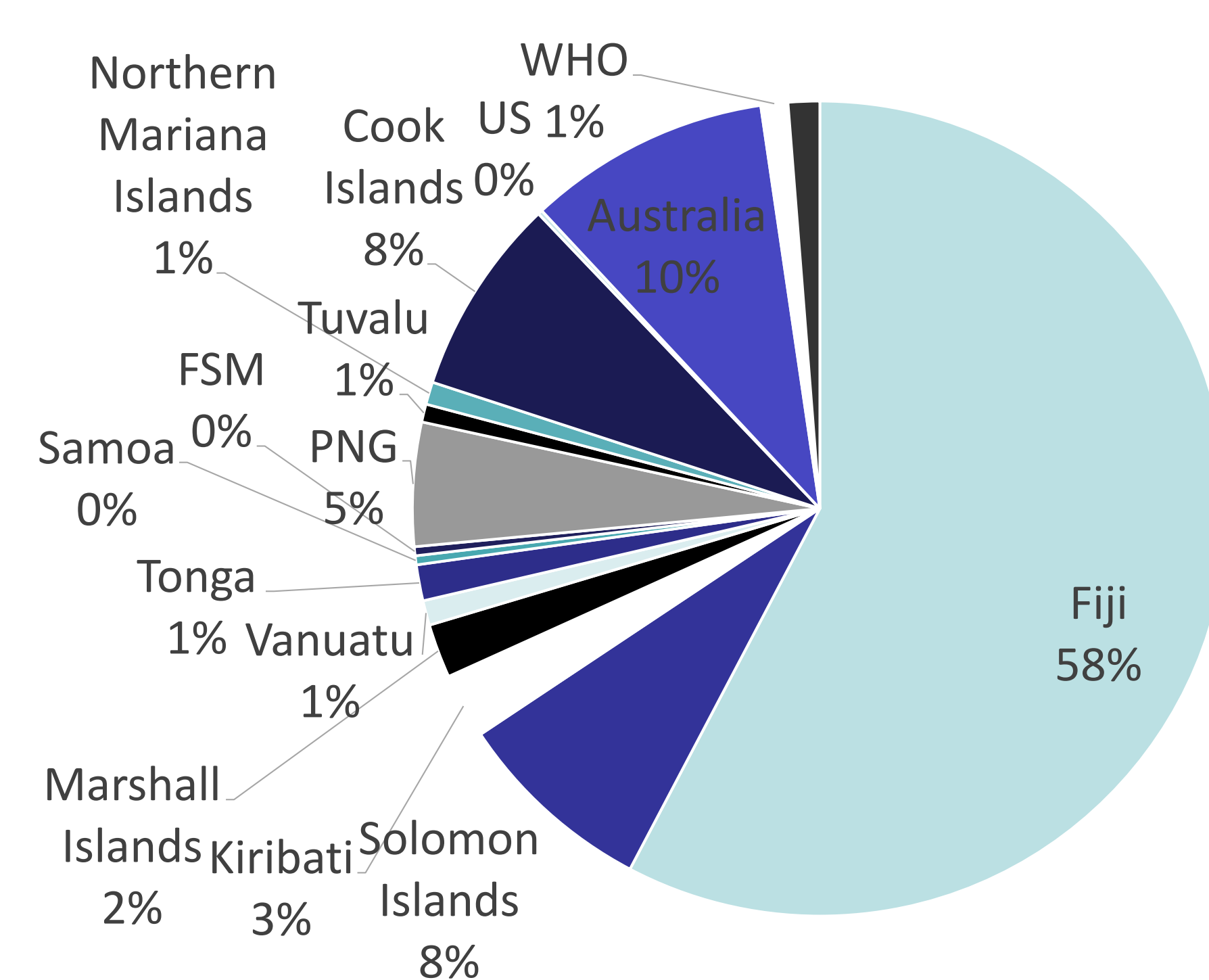
Session Title and topic	Date
Impacts of COVID-19 on mental health	23/04/2020
Nicotine and COVID-19- is now the time to give up smoking?	30/04/2020
Management of Alcohol Withdrawal	7/05/2020
Alcohol and Anxiety	14/05/2020
Communicating COVID-19	21/05/2020
Brief interventions at Outpatients	28/05/2020
Tips for providing clinical care using telehealth:	4/06/2020
COVID Safety in direct care settings	11/06/2020
Working with Trauma: Trauma Informed Care	18/06/2020
Introduction to Motivational Interviewing	25/06/2020
Spirituality as an integral part of person-centred mental health care- an introductory conversation	2/07/2020
Self Care for Mental Health workers	9/07/2020
Joint Incident Management Team (UNFPA, SPC, WHO)- regional response to COVID	23/07/2020
Telehealth for MH and Psychosocial Support	10/09/2020
Counselling	17/09/2020
Oceania Society of Mental Health Professionals (OSMHP) networking	1/10/2020
Intellectual Disability and Mental Illness	8/10/2020
Dementia	15/10/2020
Smoking Cessation	22/10/2020
Developmental Disorders	29/10/2020
Mental Health Project Work and Quality Assurance	5/11/2020
Spiritual Health Practitioners	12/11/2020
Solution Focused Brief Interventions	19/11/2020
Oceania Society of Mental Health Professionals (OSMHP) networking	26/11/2020

"Such sessions will keep mental health workers a refresher knowledge and motivating us."

"What a wealth of knowledge from the professional presenters."

"We love seeing you, and talking with you each week"

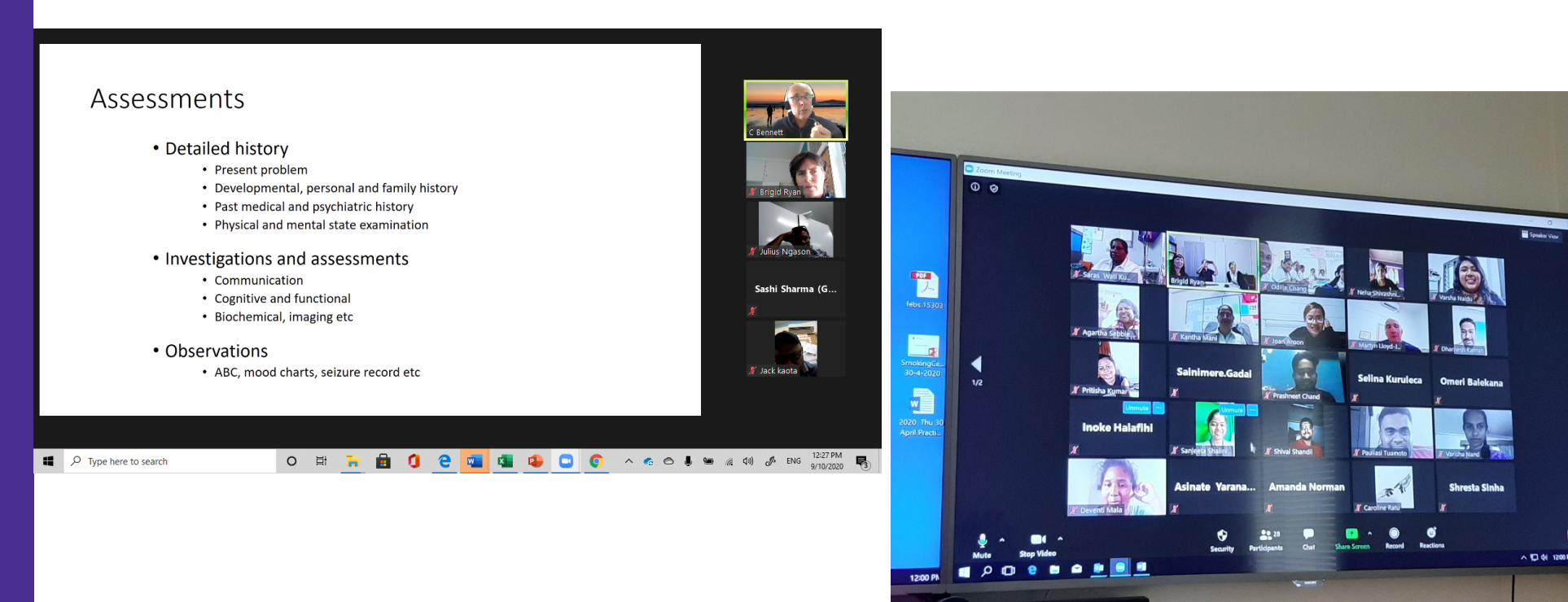
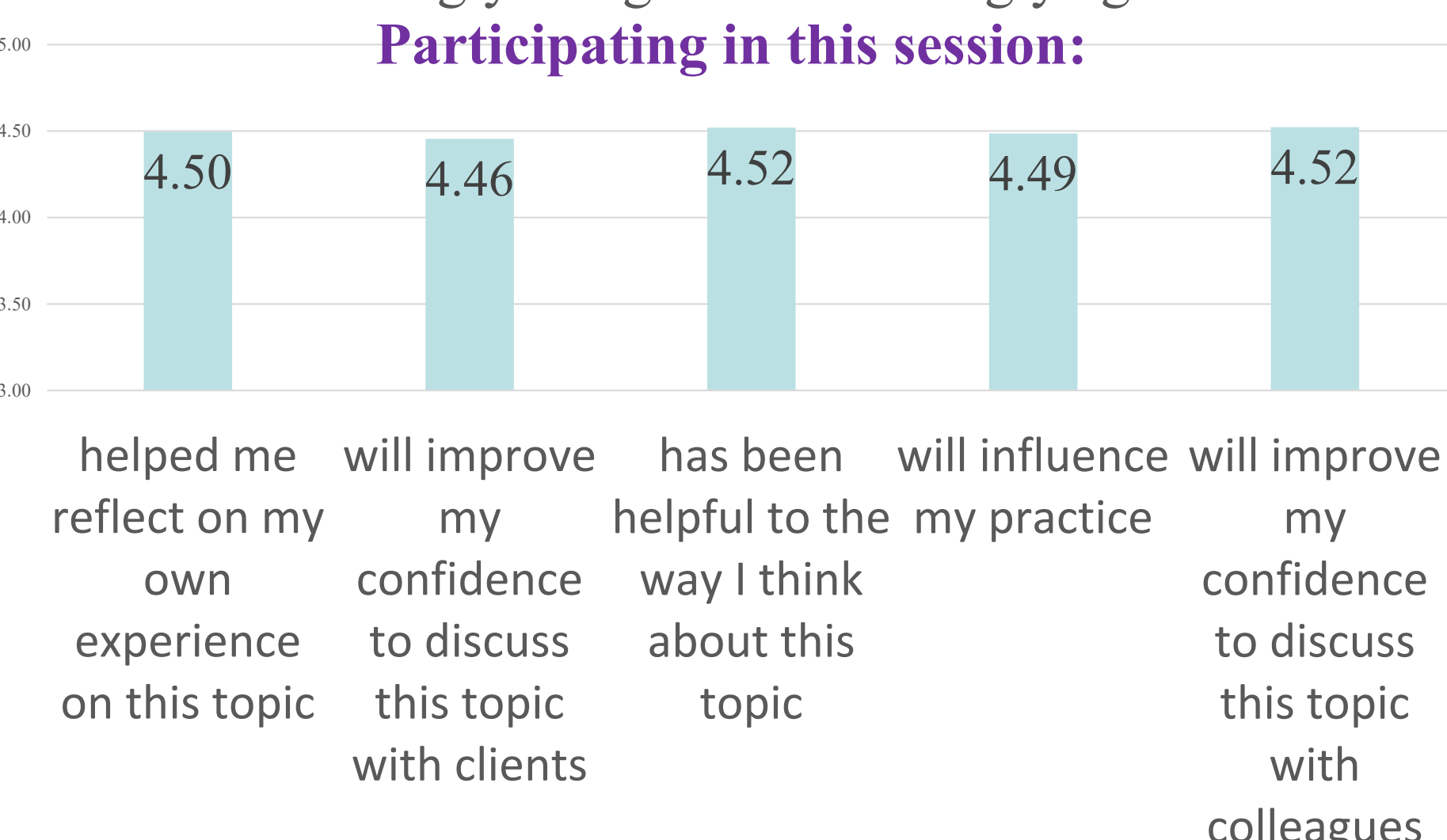
2020 Fiji Regional Telehealth session participants



Fiji Regional Telehealth Series.

Average from 287 responses on zoom poll
1-Strongly disagree-> 5- Strongly agree

Participating in this session:



Conclusion

This project established capacity and interest in telehealth initiatives for mental health services in Fiji. It engaged a wide range of multidisciplinary health workers and generated discussion for future projects. This project is an innovation during COVID for the provision of mental health services and training which can be used in other regional settings.

Acknowledgements

The project was initiated with funding from St. Vincent's Pacific Health Fund including video conferencing equipment, data recharge, online subscriptions GA069.

The project was delivered with in-kind support from St. Vincent's, Fiji National University, and participating health workers in Pacific Island nations, who shared their commitment to responding to this key public health priority.