Laos is waiting for dental equipment

Dentaids, a U.K.-based international oral health charity, needs £6,000 (US$8,500) in funding to send eight dental surgeons to the Faculty of Dentistry at the National University of Laos in Vientiane. Although the equipment is ready to be shipped out, the anticipated funding for the crafting and shipping has not been realised, the organisation has announced in a press release.

The equipment is urgently needed to advance the quality of dental training in Laos, which has only 300 dentists to serve a population of 8.5 million people. Its only dental school currently has 170 students enrolled in a six-year course that leads to a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. According to Dentaids, less than half of the 18 dental chairs and units at the school are in working order, with 19 students per chair and unit. The Dentaids surgeons could double the capacity of both the clinical training of the students and the treatment of patients. In addition, the surgeons will introduce a cross-infection procedure that will serve as a model for other treatment centres in Laos.

Upon delivery, a Dentaids engineer will provide on-site installation and train a group of technicians in the servicing and maintenance of the equipment. [1]

Dental services in Brunei fall short

The Ministry of Health in Brunei has admitted that the country’s Dental Service is facing a serious shortage of staff, training, and dental clinics. According to Minister of Health, Pehin Dato Hj Suyoi, who spoke at a dental forum in capital Bandar Seri Begawan in January, only 28 dental officers currently serve the total population of 81,000 people under the Primary Oral Health Care Scheme. There is also a low number of local graduates as well as foreign dentists with suitable qualifications for the post of Dental Officer, he added.

The Dental Service Department under the Ministry of Health has a budget of A$10 million (US$6.7 million) last year for dental services, an increase of approx. 25 per cent compared to 2007. The rise took its toll on the health budget, as 5.9 per cent of the health budget in 2008 was for dental expenditure, compared with 5.5 per cent the previous year.

Pehin Dato Hj Suyoi said that the Ministry is working with the University of Brunei Darussalam to set up a dental clinic at the National University of Brunei. He added that the Dental Service Department is granted the necessary resources to provide better health care. He said that the Ministry has already taken measures to overcome the lack of adequate dental facilities, by expanding four major clinics in the Brunei-Muara district. The new Muara Health Centre, which will have two dental chairs, is being built, and another new clinic is planned for the Gadong Health Centre.

Pehin Dato Hj Suyoi announced that from next year, an Oral Health Surveillance and Research Unit will be established, to monitor and evaluate the country’s oral health status, especially that of children. A similar programme has already been implemented, but due to the high number of clinical commitments in dental clinics, there have been difficulties in arranging appointments, he said. The Ministry is also developing a protocol for Primary Oral Care Guidelines for dental professionals, and other programmes that focus on the prevention of oral diseases and the importance of oral health measures in homes and schools.

According to figures from the WHO Western Pacific Region office, almost 90 per cent of children between 6 and 12 in Brunei suffer from dental decay. [1]

UCLA receives US$1 million pledge from Shapiro Foundation

New chair honouring dean Dr No-Hee Park to advance dental medical research

Dr No-Hee Park, Dean of the UCLA School of Dentistry (DTI/UCLA) [3]

Korean-born Dr Park received his DDS Degree from Seoul National University in 1968 and joined the faculty of the UCLA School of Dentistry in 1984. There, he served as the Director of the Dental Research Institute and Associate Dean for Research. Named Dean of the School in 1998, he was appointed for a third term in 2006 and is the longest-serving dean in the School’s history.

Under Dr Park’s leadership, the School has emerged as a research-intensive institution, which currently ranks fifth among US dental schools in funding by the National Institutes of Health. During the past ten years, Park eliminated a deficit, stabilised student clinic operations, and increased the School’s budget from US$55 million in fiscal year 1998 to US$55 million in fiscal year 2007. His successful fundraising efforts have yielded numerous renovations, six endowed chairs for the recruitment and retention of world-class faculty members, and more than US$4 million in endowed funds. In autumn 2008, Park’s administration implemented a new DDS curriculum designed to improve the integration of basic and clinical sciences and to promote student leadership.

In addition to serving in an administrative capacity, Park is a world-renowned scientist in the area of oral and head and neck cancer research and is credited with more than 150 publications in distinguished scientific journals. He has trained more than 100 research students, post-doctoral fellows, and visiting faculty members during the past 25 years, many of whom are now faculty members of dental schools, medical schools, and colleges of life sciences in the US, Europe, and Asia.

The Dr No-Hee Park Endowed Chair in Dentistry, the seventh endowed professorship for the School, is part of a ten-year campaign to increase the School’s endowment by US$50 million, to ensure its continued financial stability and success. [3]